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WEARING THE WILLOW;

OR,

BRIDE FIELDING.

A TALE OF IRELAND AND OF SCOTLAND
SIXTY YEARS AGO.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'THE NUT-BROWN MAIDS.'

Henrietta Keddie

'This morn is merry June, I trow,
The rose is budding fain,
But it shall bloom in winter snow
Ere we two meet again, my love,
Ere we two meet again.'

'He turned his horse round, while he gave
Upon the river shore,
He gave his bridle reins a shake,
With "adieu for evermore, my love,
Adieu for evermore."

LONDON:
JOHN W. PARKER AND SON, WEST STRAND.
1860.

Keddie

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WEARING THE WILLOW;

OR,

BRIDE FIELDING.

CHAPTER I.

A DUBLIN TABLE.

OLD Dublin was worthy of attention. The Irish Parliament sat then. Real Irish members, after toasting each other at a succession of convivial feasts, began the business of the session in full dress, with swords by their sides, which the wisest of them used frantically on his friend and neighbour; real patriots, mad enough, confident enough, but neither bullies, fools, nor knaves, struggled in that arena; real orators, with wonderful bursts of thought and fancy, rendering brogue forgotten, addressed that assembly; and true touches of exquisite kindliness and the chivalry of fine gentlemen, atoned for much of the swagger, the mixture of self-deception and blarney, the coarseness and the weakness, which

found its way within time-honoured walls. Peers and peeresses, Milesian blood, blue even to royalty, filled the Lord Lieutenant's levees and graced my Lady's balls. The silver tickets for the theatre in Crow-street were at a premium; the stage was nightly guarded by an armed sentry at each end; the boxes were stiff with the magnificence of court suits, and alive with rollicking Irish gaiety, stimulating and rewarding rough but brilliant native talent, and wandering stars. The purple tints of the rebellion yet lingered on the horizon; men in hundreds walked the streets who had worn other coats at the sieges of Wexford and Enniscorthy; blanks in family genealogies were passed over with the significant turn of a sentence or in constrained silence, for it was terribly awkward to whisper in the presence even of an easy-minded elderly lady that her husband was shot down like a dog by the English dragoons, or worse, by his first-cousin in the county yeomanry; and to explain ever so briefly—that this wildest of beaux, simplest of spendthrifts, and most honest and honourable of consumers of hogsheads of claret, succeeded his ambitious elder brother, who was caught in the fact and hanged over his own house-door, which the light heart of the next heir never entered without a shudder, succeeded by a fever, whose restlessness hunted him to his grave. Old Dublin, when it was not a deserted capital, when its tenants were gentry, and its boarding-houses afforded the gayest company (certainly the freest and wittiest, yet in all their excesses answering to

the untranslatable spell of birth and breeding) within the United Kingdom, Old Dublin, we will say, must have well deserved a visit.

It was towards the close of this era—the very fighting, frolicsome, bowing and curtseying (in more than body) times of shrewd, egotistical, not very scrupulous, yet far from ungenerous Sir Jonah, that Blake's boarding-house flourished in Merrion-street, and saw daily gathered together at its unaffected, inexpensive meals, more good manners of the day, pride, passion, good humour, and good looks, than are now to be discovered in scores of dignified mansions and throughout the routine of elegant services. It was the usual moderately-early dinner hour, the ordinary fare— soup, neither mulligatawny, turtle, Jerusalem, brown, nor white—nondescript soup, eaten with massive spoons in use long before the battle of the Boyne; roast mutton (tell it not in Gath!) not at all despised; turbot quite undervalued; laughing Irish potatoes (grown grim); syllabubs and pastry made by ladies' hands well pleased with their office; cream-cheese, mouldy bottles of port, pitchers of claret, and the like—and the usual guests under the care but scarcely needing the countenance of the host.

Blake was of ancient descent—be certain of that; and it will be perfectly comprehensible why, having scrambled all his life for a living—been jockey, actor, and, stranger still, dancing-master—he was appealed to with perfect familiarity by the sufficiently exclu-

sive and sometimes arrogant gentlemen surrounding his table. Blake was a queer old fellow, not at all low in his ruffles, his queue, and his shoe-buckles, but not without rapacity after his shifts, or caustic acuteness under his blunders. Did he not compliment Lord Clonmellick on winning my Lady, and mention his only unsuccessful speech to Councillor Trelawney, and ask Terry M'Mahon how he stumbled on the stone which cut the cheek at the corner of his bright eye right to the bone? Every one used freedom with Blake. Not one took a liberty, or tested how far his greed of gain would overcome his code of propriety. He was a gentleman entertaining gentlemen, and capable of comprehending their interests, and sympathizing with their tastes, though he of course pocketed their notes and their silver, for which necessity of life—simply acknowledged a necessity—he had once stood out before the footlights, and exercised his agility in jigs and hornpipes, and his stateliness, *à la Grand Monarque*, in minuets. He was not ashamed of these phases; he still gave them his songs from O'Keefe, and instructed Bride Fielding how to point her toe when she was bitten with the fancy of executing 'Cover the Buckle,' like pretty Gracey the chambermaid.

Mrs. Blake was of a meaner line; and that, or the fact that, in passing through this world, the more delicate garment of tone and tact belonging to the fair sex becomes, when its value is not warranted to last, sooner and more ineradicably smirched by hard expe-

diences and coarse associations, produced the result that Mrs. Blake was less of a lady than her husband was a gentleman. She was what loud-voiced, high-coloured, bustling Irish women of a certain age are apt to be—pretty strongly flavoured with vulgarity. She had also her failings. Is it incumbent on us to impress upon the reader that they were augmented by her niche in the world, neither higher nor lower, as it happened to be? She had her strategies with her staff, she was a fixture at her nightly whist-table, she squabbled fiercely—nay, under the influence of potent will and imagination, she instituted compulsion for the spoil, and she drank wine, and even punch—well, rather imprudently for her age, her fulness of habit, and rosiness of complexion. Poor Mrs. Blake! is she dismissed with disgust? Ah me! how she must have been slandered. She had a kind, motherly heart, into which an innocent young thing like Bride Fielding did not recoil from pouring her happy foolish stories, though she was sorry, too, was Bride, that Mrs. Blake would smell of Irish rappee, with which she secretly solaced herself—and worse, smuggled brandy. Still Mrs. Blake so coddled Bride, when her little finger ached, would walk the whole length of Sackville- or Kildare-street to get her young friend an invitation—and she was not without influence through the magnates who frequented her house—or to manage for her the acquisition of a new, pretty, cheap dress; and who but Mrs. Blake so lavished on Bride and Dolly Nugent (but Bride was

the favourite) all her beautiful Irish diamonds? Very different the Irish diamonds looked on Bride's white gown and small figure, than when displayed on Mrs. Blake's crimson tabinet and ample solid bulk; so, perhaps, the very qualities which were extremely loveable in young, fresh, unvitiated Bride, continued to exist in mature, seeded, withered, soil-stained Mrs. Blake, and formed a bond of union between them. At least it is certain that, though Mrs. Blake made a display of her management, she was not mean; she was indulgent as well as tyrannical to Gracey, to her cook, and to her grey-headed table-boy; she was bountiful to the poor; she was intensely faithful to Blake, and counted him a hero, not only when he was at the head of his boarding-house, but when she baked his bread and toasted his rasher, and he was a failing dancing-master; and she said her prayers with humble heartiness. It is very doubtful whether it was to the credit of some of the ladies of the establishment that they were less tender to her than the gentlemen were to her spouse (they condescended to bicker with her, and it was not their fault if they did not snub her fairly). We must hint the suggestion that women are less generous than men—to women; or else we must *finesse*, and say that, because they come nearer the offender, and see farther into her constitution, they are of course more offended by her lapses from perfect virtue and irreproachable elegance.

Let us suppose Mrs. Blake at the head of her

crowded table, fiery with the heat of a precocious June day, her two fat arms extended ready to divide the fish, for Mrs. Blake scorned aid from supporters, her rolling eyes following and threatening wrinkled Mike in his inappropriate boots and cords, shambling off to conceal the oily state of the melted butter, and to substitute the anchovies; and Blake imperturbable at the foot of the files, dispatching his mutton face to face with the fish, and refreshing himself in the middle of his labours by drinking wine courteously but coolly with my Lord. Though the season was about to end, there were no vacant places in the horse-hair seats of the square dining-room; the Castle band was heard faintly through the open windows, into which passers-by—clerks and mechanics, independent ladies and sturdy beggars—stared and were edified; the fumes of the dinner rose in no lofty space, and circulated round the green painted walls on no more attractive accessories than cracked china on the chimney-piece, dimmed and flawed girandoles, gleaming squintingly in the declining sun on the blind wax candles, a splendid pair of antlers from Clonmellick, a few stuffed birds and foxes, and tolerable portraits of the elder Sheridan and Lord Clare. Mrs. Blake called it a handy dining-room, and doubtless it was a handy dining-room, comfortable in cool weather—social always.

Next the host, the ungallant seat of honour, then, sat invariably, save when he ran down to his place, or accepted an invitation, my Lord Clonmellick, with

his own man behind his chair, flirting idly with the water in his finger-glass, when he was not scowling up at my Lady. Ah, ha! his name silences joking; here was the spectacle of what power, licence, and passion made a man. He was a thin, delicate-looking man, powdered to a pearly grain, ruffled after the consistency of a spider's web, wearing his Order punctually, not in mock diamonds, and rather quiet withal. Yet men were apt to look furtively at the ghastly lines on his face, to tremble at his low, shaky voice; careless, worldly fathers shrank from his notice of their promising children; few would have coveted his high society, or cared to be the recipients of his confidence; none would have wittingly shared his rue, which all mortals pluck less or more. There sat a man who had abused his privileges, wasted his birthright, despoiled his people, alienated his friends, and cumbered his soul heavily—and a living evidence sat opposite in the person of my Lady. He had wanted her when he was rich, she poor; he crafty, she simple; he ardent with a pampered tyrant's wilfulness, she soft-hearted with a gracious woman's charity. He might have had her companionship, body and soul, only instinct held back the honest heart and sound mind from mating with my Lord Clonmellick and his reputation; and my Lord would not wait or work for his end; he snatched it rudely and brutally, bruising those frail enough things a woman's affections and happiness, to destruction; he pillaged her weak father, and spurred on her wild

brother, and took her—protesting, with white cheeks and set teeth, as other ladies of the treasonable times did before her: 'I hate and loathe you. Marry me, my Lord Clonmellick, at your peril;' and the threat was yet quivering on the desperate lips when they re-opened to swear the marriage-vow.

He 'changed a wholesome heart to gall.' Lady Clonmellick was a lost woman—not, in one sense, for she kept her character; she was only a ball-giver, a traveller, a gambler, a devotee in the French interpretation—anything but a peaceful, retiring, home-loving woman. She lived with him now, as she said openly, not so much for the maintenance and position which he had given her at so high a price, but to serve as a shield to his orphan nephews and nieces (she had no family of her own), whom he would have otherwise persecuted and tortured; for my Lord did not fail to fear her in his way, as men have an awe of those on whom they have inflicted a deadly wrong.

After all, suffering is the great dignifier. No bodies are more languidly graceful than those wasted by the hot breath of the tropics; and crowns of thorns —think of them reverently—make brows very stately in their drooping. My Lady Clonmellick might have been a comely, ordinary woman, in a happy lot of common joys and sorrows; as it was, she was wan and sombre, with a queen-like paleness and pride —gentle too, and not fractious, as the tempest will scoop a clean hole and shear smooth a wooded moun-

tain side. It is a very stale figure, but Lady Clonmellick, in her black velvet gown and white gauze turban, like any woeful princess, did remind you of a tall fleur-de-lis, an arum, a campanula, broken, yellow, draggled, but forlornly noble; and people approached her softly in her misery, as they accosted my Lord quakingly in his guilt.

These were the grandees of the party; next them in rank was Councillor Trelawney, a powerful man, and an impressive pleader at the bar, by sheer clearness of brain—not a very Irish faculty—and force of words, caustic everywhere, so as to spice all companies—racily waggish in his best moods.

Halting after him came Captain Nugent, who had fought in the American War, and was now a battered, lame, simple old man, most genial of grumblers. Captain Nugent owned a wife and daughter; the first had undergone garrison wear and tear, strife and emulation, and it had not developed her individuality favourably. She was an ugly edition of Mrs. Blake, as loud, but her loudness was something of a mask; for she was wary where Mrs. Blake was heedless, and selfish where Mrs. Blake was magnanimous. The second was a young beauty, fair-skinned, dove-eyed, soft for the Green Isle, where all women sparkle like dew-drops, but romantic to her shoe-tie; and now, with deep schemes on her mother's part, and fond vanity dazzling her father, finishing the education which was to render her a charming creature—not so much a perfect woman as an Irish

divinity. Sir Jonah has remarked on the rapid extension of accomplishments, and even of beauty—a few tunes on the harpsichord, a good feature or passable shape, once constituted a witch, and broke hearts by the score; hearts are less brittle ware now, though women are more fully armed. Dolly Nugent, with her rose-leaf skin and her dewy eyes, had also a flexible voice and a fair memory, and was at present under the valuable tuition of the first Dublin player, learning carefully to sing, recite, and read ravishingly. These lessons were a great favour; and though Mr. Carew was generally accessible, and Councillor Fielding begged for the same as a special benefit to polish Bride, the great man was inflexible, and would not repeat the pleasant task.

This player was the one marked exception at Mr. Blake's table. He was not a gentleman by birth, but his talent had elevated him to a footing with the others which no one questioned, though salaries were not so high as to afford poor Carew, the successor of Quin and Barry, any prospect of doing more than appear in good society—and when he tired of single life, he must resign that pretension, or more likely retain it, at the expense of a hand-to-hand fight with the wolf at his door. What of that now? He was the life of Blake's circle; he was a genius—affluent, adaptive, winning. He was a middle-aged man, plain, with his nose broken in an accident, to which neither Michael Angelo nor Henry Fielding's true love and darling wife Charlotte Craddock can reconcile the

world at large; yet he had only to speak, and his listeners forgot his personality; he might have been Riquet with the Tuft, or Prince Fortunatus with equal indifference to them; he carried them out of themselves, and away with him, and that was the gain. He might not have been very deep—the more the pity for them—or very lofty—the greater the loss to him; but there was he, rich in human sympathy, and gifted with full expression; he ranted in private clothes and domestic life, and the commonplace and the trifling flaunted their handkerchiefs, or stole them to their eyes; he uttered a little joke, and so quaint and rich was the manner, that earnest, sad men and women shook their sides with laughter. Never say that man had not a great endowment.

After Carew, if far below him in ability, was one of several guests in the room to-day, and a frequent guest at Blake's—Councillor Fielding. He was not very bright, not very original, not very anything, unless sweet-tempered and gentle-hearted. He had respectable abilities and success, natural in so popular a man as he was—that pleasantest thing, a cheery and bland Irishman. Hearts thawed again at Councillor Fielding's sunny smile, which had frozen after Carew's moving addresses, and which would have been parched dry by Trelawney's biting wit. He was a walking sunbeam; he could have consoled—doubtless he had often achieved the triumph—many an unlucky client. Unfortunately, he was notoriously more improvident and imprudent than sunbeams are in our cloudy country.

Pray, do not forget that men who, in the march of social economy, and the practical knowledge of arithmetic tables, and the trumpet-blast dinning forethought and moderation in their ears, cannot be thriftless and reckless without positive dishonesty and inveterate selfishness, were both the one and the other once, in those scatter-brain days and hand-to-mouth habits, without great harm meant by the offender, or attributed on the part of the public. The world was hardly in more than a transition state, after the old unsettled foundations and ever-recurring shocks and downfalls.

There were but two other men in the goodly company, distant relatives of Clonmellick's, young fellows come up on a holiday occasion—the marriage of the elder on the very day following to an eagerly-sought bride in a country house ten miles distant. These lads were Boyles of Knockmore; a stock which it seemed nothing could tame. They were one of those races whose members, alas! regularly died at forty and odd, Nimrods or Ishmaels of country pleasures and dissipations, games and broils, Jehus who drove the chariot of life furiously. They had in course of time got rid of their old grossness and ignorance by college educations, and they had, wonderful to say, only brushed the skirts of rebellion with little effect on their hereditary constitution and fortunes. They were wild spirits even now, insanely wearing their follies and errors on their sleeves; and Bride Fielding, who accompanied her father as a privileged ad-

dition in the hospitable house, glanced shyly for her, once and again, at bridegroom and groomsman, though Bride had seen a 'power' of gentlemen in her early-begun career—and, let me assure you, with all their faults, no shadows or thread-papers those bold-spirited, dashing, unique men of an era—still you will confess the two last were in interesting circumstances to a girl of seventeen. The heir and his younger brother, the conqueror and his second, were not more than lads to-day, but they, too, had seen life, and not only on its false and forbidden sides, though that, too, unfortunately. They were daring riders, crack shots, hard hunters, passable naturalists, high revellers, accomplished card-players, skilful electioneering men, and shrewd judges of ordinary human nature without fail—so much was every Boyle born and cradled at Knockmore long before he was twenty. They were dressed alike in green coats lined with white silk, and formally, but richly, braided, cambric shirts, white knee-breeches, and white silk stockings, and they came into the room with their cocked hats under their arms. They wore their own hair dressed and tied behind with ribbon in broad bows in similar fashion, and they were much of the same height; yet there was a decided difference between them—it might be in the complexion, or in the short two years' separation in age, or in the circumstances in which the one stood, and the other merely wished him well; but there was a break between those of the same parents reared

under one roof and in like use and want. Con, the bridegroom, was a dark-haired, pale, handsome fellow, showing the traces of even two years' seniority in such experience. He was wan, not flushed with wine, and wild with eagerness for the morrow. You could almost see the pulse in the sinewy wrist, as well as the glitter in the eye, and hear the hard breathing. The effect of true love on a bodily nature nurtured to vigour and stimulated to fever, whose mental growth was the eccentricities of violent fancy, and not the manly consistencies of reason, and whose heart was green, was a frenzy, and like a frenzy it would pass away, leaving—not the cruel husband—few Irish gentlemen, unless the most demoralized, incurred that reproach—but the gay, careless husband, habitually negligent, and as much an absentee from his wife's society as from his books and accounts; still, dying after a debauch, or a fall at hunting, or a pistol-shot, with her name and the names of his children, coupled with a last fervent blessing, thrilling his bloodless lips.

It would be hard to convince another generation of the freaks and feats of Con Boyle's courtship—how he had ridden day after day fifty miles for a glimpse of 'her' face—how he had leapt the park wall, defying the mistakes of her father's keepers, and paced many a dark, stormy hour like 'the Irish lad so tight,' beneath the one beacon window—how at the end of an assize ball, where she had slighted him, he had challenged the whole list of astounded

men who had been her partners in the innumerable country dances of the evening—and how in his madness he had solemnly sworn to take his own life if she finally refused him. And all the time he gloried in his flame. Con Boyle and his love, how hard he was hit, how desperately he fought for his prize, was the theme of his entire acquaintance, and he was ready at any moment to afford the last information of his position—he shouted it on the hunting-field, and, putting spurs to his horse, and bending forward in his saddle, rode game for a broken neck—he called it over the claret, and the blood oozed from his bruised fist as he struck it on the hard oak table, and sprung from his torn lip, while he mentioned uncertainty and foreboded defeat—he said it out quite loud in the church itself, (woe is me for his idolatry!) and was heard above the chanting at mass, which he disturbed by storming down the aisle because *she* was not there; and, amid all this clamour, so soon to burn out when his prayers were granted, the lad was in deadly sincerity.

Bride Fielding had heard of Con Boyle of Knockmore and his devotion to Mary Power of Balreah, and she now met him with satisfaction, and kept secretly commenting on him with simple approval. Bride was too sensible, even in her youthful fancies, not to guess that this allegiance, at present in the heyday of its strength, would slacken and be weakened by-and-bye; but Bride judged improvidently, and a little recklessly, that it would be worth something to be so adored for a week, a month, a year and

a day. Worth what, vain, susceptible, little Bride? A lifetime of unrequited patient care, and yearning, starved fondness, a span of goading disappointment, and poisoning pique, and maddening jealousy? No; scarce worth even the lightest flicker of thy long eyelids, the faintest throb of thy virgin heart.

Frank Boyle was less formally handsome than his brother, and not so eminently popular. His brown hair, without, by any figure of speech, approaching red, had the sanguine dash which is trying to a man's complexion, and which was the very same hue that gave the peculiar burnished warmth to Bride Fielding's chesnut curls. His forehead loomed rather heavily over his eyes, and rendered the fact that the eyes were far finer than Con's, of a deep, bright, sapphire blue, less observed. He wanted Con's dashing swoop—the impetus of manner which carries everything before it. That manner had great attractions; it seemed to become the turbulent life it expressed; it blinded one to its narrowness, haughtiness, and wilfulness, and it set off in picturesque relief the reservations and exceptions it chose to allow. Frank, though bold enough and ready enough, like the son of an Irish great house, for the most part accustomed to lead the way, to be looked up to and copied, was so by circumstances alone, or by not more than half his nature. Beneath the surface he was reserved; and reserve, unless in the acknowledged superior or inferior, the competent master or the harmless subordinate, begets distrust.

Even Con had his suspicions of Frank, and proclaimed them waggishly and maliciously to-night to those strangers. Frank was a shy scholar; Frank read more than the country paper or the farrier's recipe. Frank dabbled in mathematics and Latin still of a rainy morning, and argued with the parish priest, Father Delany. A few years back, he would have been in horror that Frank would conform, and step into his shoes. Frank denied the whole charge shortly, and almost tartly. But if Con was, as they would say in Scotland, the 'brawer' man, Frank was the stronger; the one was like the glittering, malleable gold; the other the untempered ore of the hard, cutting iron. Bride, girl-like, gave at first all her attention and admiration to the gold; and, according to the way of the world, Con, with Mary Power's name ringing in his ears and her face swimming before his sight, in an ecstacy of delight, hardly recognised Bride's existence, while Frank again perversely intercepted and returned her notice with interest, until Bride pouted at the liberty, and gave up the game in indignation and disgust.

Entertain some interest in these two brothers, though they are rude, untutored, and unrestrained in their well-born way. They deserve at least the admiration you might lavish on Hawk-eye or Hind-foot among the Iriquois Indians, from their trails over the golden maple leaves, or on Hakon Jarl and Sigrid the Avenger, resuscitated from the snows of the North. Nay, they have an advantage—these brothers—be-

sides their natural metal—their code of honour stern and uncompromising amid so much that is lax—magnanimous and faithful in the centre of selfishness and falsehood, is a relic of Christian chivalry; and remember these young men are not scoffers at what they know to be good. Their ignorance may be so great that they may depend largely on their instincts; and their moral emptiness and incapacity may be mainly chargeable on themselves, inasmuch as the heavens above them, and the weakest of good men around them, have been discoursing from all time of 'temperance, righteousness, and judgment to come.' But their culpability is not that of the 'scorner,' nor does it degrade them to a level with the 'fool.'

Only two more individuals of the June dinner party, and the catalogue is complete; and these two are soon summed up—an old maid and a young—Mrs. Anastasia Macqueen, and Bride Fielding.

Mrs. Anastasia was an amateur poetess of the first water, but by no means without sharpness and sagacity; indeed, her later poetry was frequently satirical, and she only sweetened herself and the public now and then with an 'Ode to Friendship,' an 'Epitaph on a Departed Lover,' a eulogy on a hero, or an 'Advice to a Newly-wedded Pair.' Although Mrs. Anastasia had frightened away all suitors, neither was she without some tender and constant feelings under her professional irritability and old-maidish acerbity. She was a little, lean, yellow, twinkling-eyed woman, with a red scarf round her head, and a highly unbecoming

plum-coloured gauze gown. Yet, strange to say, Mrs. Anastasia might have worn satin and velvet; but, although particular in her own queer costume, she treated herself to no luxuries of attire. Whether her money went to Utopian schemes of general benefit, to unfortunate and obscure relatives, with whom she had never spoken in her life, whether it accumulated and rusted, or whether she relieved the ragged gossoons and smoke-dried caillachs, with whom she would be spied out talking in corners and by-ways, is not upon record. Unquestionably Mrs. Anastasia presented contradictions in her walk and conversation —not blooming, blithe, young Bride was served more loyally, all for love, by Gracey and Mike, than old, restless Mrs. Anastasia; and of the one great tragedy in which Mrs. Anastasia had been mixed up in the course of her life, she never rhodomontaded. Mrs. Anastasia had been surprised, along with a party of friends, in a country house in the south, surrounded by the insurgent peasantry, in the year 179—. She had undergone a siege, she had witnessed horrors, and anticipated the King of Terrors with a vivid appreciation of his near approach—before her deliverance. Afterwards, she never wrote a line on the subject, never discoursed of it, if she could help it. Bride had required many a time to coax her, by listening to her 'pieces' drawn from her bag, and read by the authoress for an hour at a time, ere Bride could win from her a single particular of that awful interlude.

Now Bride is the only little remnant of that old unconsciously-brilliant dinner-party, and Bride was Councillor Fielding's only, healthy, gleeful child, and a child spoilt to a turn, not only by her father and quiet North-country mother, but by all her friends. A little woman of seventeen, no more, but into company—suggestive, striking, fascinating company—these two years; as precocious an observer almost as little Fanny Burney, and as affectionate and winning to those most worth attracting, with just so much of her half-Scotch, Ulster mother in her constitution as to render her more steadfast than her father, with all his sunny enjoyment of life and brimming gladness. Oh, a very dangerous person was Bride Fielding in her 'crop'—those clustering chesnut curls, with their ineffable youthfulness, and just a dash of boyishness; in the complexion seen with such hair, a pure red and white, softened in its brilliance, relieved from delicacy by the sprinkling of wholesome, hardy, open-air freckles—those freckles so sorrowed over, so rubbed in vain with port wine and butter-milk, and what-not, yet starting out, for all that, over the ivory forehead, and the clear, if rebellious, features; in the round, but firm, outline of the face; in the hazel eyes, with their lashes nearer duskiness than anything else about that fresh, comely body; in the dress—the white frock—not made more womanly by the cherry-coloured ribands, 'strappers,' passed over the shoulders, and crossed on back and on chest. Very like a cherry altogether,

a ripening, rosy-sided, roguish, June cherry, was Bride. Silly Bride, she perceived this effect with her observant eye, and lamented the juvenile air even more poignantly than the freckles, so she sought to amend it by what ladies occasionally wore in dress then—a snowy, starched, muslin kerchief, quite covering the shoulders, peeping over the body of her gown—and a stiff, worked apron, which only served to add a comical, quaint finish to the youthful figure.

A frank, kind, sparkling young Irish girl, whether wild or tame, a general favourite, at home with most of those noted persons, she was another attraction—one would have said 'Kate Kearney' was written from her—

> 'Though she looks so bewitchingly simple,
> There's mischief in every dimple,
> And who dares inhale her sigh's spicy gale,
> Must die by the breath of Kate Kearney.'

Oh! take warning in time; run over all the great effects from little causes; don't pooh and pshaw the child for ignorance of everything except a girl's polite education ready-made for every age; don't trust to superior wisdom, or strength, or worldliness—merry little girl, unhackneyed, undesigning, neither cruel, nor crafty, but wise enough for all purposes in ingeniousness and enthusiasm—of such as you, and few beyond you, it is inscribed again and again—

> 'Fatal's the glance of Kate Kearney.'

CHAPTER II.

A DUBLIN TABLE—(*continued*).

HAT was remarkable in the Blake dinner was the innate good humour, the courtesy, which pervaded it; even the terrible Lord Clonmellick and his frozen wife, and the engrossed literary Mrs. Anastasia, the two extremes of the table, between which there was small magnetism, were alike good company in a general way. No unpleasant topics, no dangerous allusions—the sheep's trotters that ran so fast from the Boyne, the casks of raisins, the westerly winds—were thought of; and the questions of the day, their great men, their Castlereaghs and Grattans, were mentioned politely and dispassionately. Lord Norbury's and Jerry Keller's last buffoonery; Ned Lysacht's newest song; the sermon which had reminded them of the great Dean Kirwan's; who was losing at piquet to the Duchess; what Miss Campion played to-night; the ordinary Dublin gossip, but treated with charac-

teristic lightness and tenderness; only Blake did make some remark to Clonmellick on Lord Kingston's case—an awkward antecedent, then and there, and asked a question on writs and attorneys, at Con Boyle, as if these commodities were likely to flourish or to find a welcome reception at Knockmore; but Mrs. Blake rectified him with the suavest of matrimonial telegraphs, and the interruption—'Pass the slouchan, Blake?'

Blake drank 'the King and the Services' very decorously, and both ladies and gentlemen rose and paid the first toast punctilious honour, Bride Fielding making a grave tub-curtsey, and almost losing her balance by angrily catching Frank Boyle's blue eye as she rose again to her modest height.

Councillor Fielding gave 'the Bar' with only one characteristic anecdote delivered with loving zest—that sweet, heroic speech of great Henry Grattan's in answer to a demand on him to silence a raw opponent's audacity.

'No, no, no! we are not at all on a fair level. I could do him a great deal of mischief—he can do me none. My name is made—he is trying to make one too; he's a bold boy, but I don't think he's a bad one.'* No wonder that there was a murmur of applause from Whig and Tory, town and country.

Trelawney replied, running over a guarded, ironical

* *Life and Times of Sir Jonah Barrington.*

summary of national affairs, topping it with the Dean's recommendation to eat the babies; at which the ladies screamed, but nobody was offended.

Clonmellick rose with lingering dignity, and, as the man of highest rank, proposed a bumper to the bride of to-morrow—Con Boyle's bride. Some felt it ominous that the toast should be in such hands, and several eyes disseminated the sentiment. But what cared Con Boyle for omens?—he drank it the first with flashing eyes, he led the 'three times three' so lustily that it sounded like a view halloo, he sprang up with a foot on the table, and with one last wild cheer emptied his glass, waved it in the air, and dashed it to the ground, the ladies applauding while they screened themselves from the sharp shower. As for the gentlemen, the excitement was infectious, and more modern, every-day goblets would have shared the fate of the Luck of Edenhall, had not Mrs. Blake leapt up nimbly and grasped Councillor Fielding's arm, crying irresistibly, 'True for you, Councillor, darling! but who is to pay the broken crystal?'

It was fortunate that the glasses were reserved for Mr. Carew's toast. Mr. Carew anticipated the disappearance of the ladies by drinking, with the grace of one of his heroes, 'the unknown mistress, even because she was unknown, lovelier than lovely Mary Power of Balreah' (to which Con shouted in denial, with gallant effrontery, 'No, by all the *Powers*, no')—hear him out, ladies and gentlemen—'radiant in the

gems of youthful fancy and the freshness of life's spring feelings, and the purity of the generous heart's earliest dream — the unknown mistress of Mr. Frank Boyle.'

Frank flushed fiery red, but accepted the compliment eagerly and responded with tripping fluency, though Con called out 'She's delightfully indistinct, or superhumanly varied in detail; white as Sally Power; brown as Judy Masterton; a bouncer like any of the Masseys; no blessed unity for Frank yet, poor boy; alas! for what he is to suffer, good folks, before he comes to his kingdom!'

Young Bride Fielding's heart began to flutter so as to render her unable to join in the laughter. It appeared to her at the moment as if, after all the idle glances she had been deprecating, it would have been nothing, in these plain-spoken days, for young Boyle to have risen before them all, put his ruffled hand on his white waistcoat, and, bending formally, while his deep-blue eyes again shone out from their prominent brows, given a name never heard in such association—yet a very familiar name, nevertheless—only strangely situated, say that of 'Miss Bride Fielding, of Dublin, here,' drowned by a thunder of hand-clappings, an uproar of approval.

Instead, Bride was very glad to keep the secret, by hailing Mrs. Blake's jolly signal, and hurrying after the rest of the flock to the haven of the back drawing-room, with its look-out into a washing-green, its spindle-legged chairs and flounced settees,

its harpsichord, its engravings in black frames surmounted by peacocks' feathers.

Mrs. Blake disappeared at this hour, with the ostensible duty of making tea for her ladies. Mrs. Nugent appropriated the cool seat in the window, and brought back the dinner in a succession of observations which not only did it 'brown,' but iced it well.

'Where does Mrs. Blake get her joints and shoulders? Nugent was once quartered in Scotland, and fed on braxy. I would not like to say any more; every one knows I'm good humour itself. Dolly, child, would you mind your neck, after the trouble I've had with the collar? It is very odd, considering the long, calm weather—not a gale off the Head this month—that fresh fish aint to be got. We might have a bit of salmon, my Lady, not a doubt of it.'

'I don't care for it,' dropped Lady Clonmellick, in her weary way; 'but Jerry Macarthy might pack some fish, and send them with the carrier.'

'Your Ladyship is a great deal too good; we're all much obliged to you. There are those among us who would do more justice to your kindness. Such preserves! and so served!'

'Malone gathered them too wet last year; she would not let them be lost, and she would send them into town. I never saw any good come of officiousness,' commented Lady Clonmellick, absently, changing her seat.

Dolly Nugent had grown silent of late, especially at little confidential epochs like this between dinner and tea: Mrs. Anastasia was deep in composition, and had only time to whisper to Bride that the idea had taken her to pen a few lines to young Boyle of Knockmore, the dashing Boyle (the bridegroom, of course), as Strephon embracing Chloe, which Bride could not realize at all, as there was no character borne by man less suitable to Con Boyle than that of a peaceful, frugal, lackadaisical swain, and Mary Power was not in the least pastoral in her tastes and habits, and the marriage to-morrow would show no crooks nor scrips, nor snowy lambs, nor 'ewie with the crooked horn,' nor mossy bank, nor silver brook; but in spite of these discrepancies, clever Mrs. Anastasia held insanely to her point.

Fortunately the ladies' vigil was not long; there was no grievous excess to-night, no shamefully vociferous cry of 'Hark! stole away!' after the first deserter, although circumstances might have provoked it. Mr. Carew was to play, and he required to come up within an hour to receive a cup of tea made by Mrs. Blake, sweetened by Bride Fielding, and put into his hands by Dolly Nugent. (How those women love to wait upon kings, be their crowns of gold, iron, or pasteboard!) While he was very pleasant all round, so witty, and so serene, and amiable—worth a thousand sarcastic Trelawneys, the charming, melting, humble fellow that he was! and one and all would have tied his shoe or his gaiter; and little Bride

Fielding scented his handkerchief, and even Lady Clonmellick found the most perfect rose in the jar for him to twirl in his fingers along the street, or perhaps in the first act on those magic boards which he, and he alone, transformed at will into castle-wall, or garden-bower, or donjon-keep; and Dolly Nugent never stirred from her post next him as his dumb-waiter—sure enough he had, without a word, his cup and saucer, his fresh lump of sugar, his handkerchief, after Bride had performed her duty—to Lady Clonmellick's rose, all at second-hand, through the same mute, zealous fingers; and Mrs. Nugent only nodded and said aloud very graciously, 'A successful night to you, Mr. Carew;' and to herself, not less complacently, 'Dolly displays her sense in keeping in with him; he'll make a finished lady of her. How prettily she presents him with his cane at last! She'll be fit for the Lodge soon.'

Although the other gentlemen did not come up to divert a share of the attentions heaped on Carew, the rage for theatricals was at a sufficient height to carry off without fail a detachment of them, including the bridegroom, bent on whiling away the time till a bachelor carouse of his few friends in the city, which was to bid farewell to his cycle of single blessedness, and welcome in the dawn of his age of delight. Councillor Fielding departed also—to fulfil a separate engagement, bidding Mrs. Blake send Bride home at a proper hour with Gracey the chambermaid. Trelawney only stayed to break a single lance with Mrs.

Anastasia—between whom and the doughty, dogged lawyer raged a spirited, not uncordial war, and rushed to his chambers to work at a deferred brief; and, it was well known, he would think nothing of running his fingers through his hair, and writing and reading like a Trojan till morning, and not be particular about his fee when the job was done, though he would not be imposed upon, not by Ormonde or Leinster.

Captain and Mrs. Nugent, and Mr. and Mrs. Blake sat down betimes to have a good evening at short whist. Clonmellick read the newspaper come by the evening mail, at his own little table, with which none intermeddled, and my Lady, on her distant settee, sat listlessly twirling an old-fashioned quiz of that toy mania already gone out of fashion. The hostess left the duties of the tea-table to Bride and Dolly Nugent, chaperoned by Mrs. Anastasia; but though tea was made very much a business of in her experience, Bride felt herself farther injured by the determination with which Frank Boyle abode in the boarding-house, and had himself ministered to with sweet cake and bohea, returning again and again to the charge, armed with an empty cup, and inflicting it on Bride to refill, lifting up her mitten when it fell to the floor, assiduously helping her with the kettle, until they nearly dropped it between them, at the risk of scalding themselves grievously. And Bride's very round throat was pink and swelling, while her pretty, fresh complexion was spoilt

with the exertion; and she could not evade the office, for Mrs. Anastasia was in a brown study over her lines, and Dolly Nugent had retired to moon at the harpsichord.

Mrs. Blake had provided a spare pack of cards, and recommended a round game to the young people; among whom it is to be supposed she included, by courtesy, Mrs. Anastasia: but Bride would not, on any account, make a solitary pair at 'beggar my neighbour,' or quadrille with Frank Boyle; so she hastily got her netting, and ensconced herself by the musical instrument.

Frank Boyle did approach and deferentially ask Bride to sing after Dolly Nugent had finished; but Bride never put confidence in her trilled ballads. If she envied anything about Dolly Nugent, it was her shakes, and quavers, and falls, and her successful execution in her turns, and her eloquence in her beautiful speeches in those perpetual little private recitations and theatricals where Mr. Carew's favour was rapidly making her reign queen. Dolly was a fair, calm girl, not easily excited; but when wound up to a certain pitch, for that very reason the more capable of sustained effort and self-control. Dolly and Bride were schoolfellows and familiar friends; but lately a degree of distance had crept between them—not intentional, not made up of jealousy, (though, to tell the truth, Bride was the least bit in the world jealous of Dolly,) but because Dolly somehow grew more and more engrossed with her lessons

and her invitations; which were still, through Mr. Carew's introductions and representations, in a higher set than her mother's. Bride was not wont to sing after Dolly Nugent's 'Sweet Woodlands,' and 'Says a Tear to a Sigh;' and perhaps—for we all of us have a little wicked spite in our composition—the ordinary reason of the refusal was a foolish pique. But Bride had a more active and less childish reason for her present objection; and she declined the honour so decidedly, that Frank Boyle retreated to his station against a side table, where he might chew the cud of his private reflections, and bore the saucy Dublin beauties by a few more long looks, until he in his turn took his leave, and went away to meet his brother at the tavern, and support him staunchly in the rites of his last free feast. Frank fulfilled his part, as a matter of course, and an act of fraternal alliance, cared as little for a debauch as many an anchorite, and was throughout as wide awake and solid, from constitutional vigour allied to considerable practice, as the most seasoned toper in the city; but for all that, the young fellow was in a crying folly, and a grave error.

CHAPTER III.

A BRIDE PROPER AND BRIDE FIELDING.

THE early bells of Dublin rang up Bride Fielding to the sweet summer morning, rising fair and bright above houses and churches, 'red bogs, russet potato grounds, blue flashes of water, gray currahs,' and to the knowledge that the day had come round for which she had been preparing for weeks. Bride was to be present at Con Boyle's wedding; to drive the ten miles to Balreah, and spend a long day and night of splendour and mirth. And what a fine junketing, a country junketing, a wedding junketing is naturally to a young girl, most people should be able to imagine. Bride's gaiety was even a cause of excitement to her friends. Her grave mother, considerately and condescendingly styled 'poor Mrs. Fielding' by her joyous Dublin gossips, because she was of North-country extraction, and suspected of being a poor-spirited, precise person, inclined to economize the Councillor's income, and to keep Bride within

bounds, only she was too wise a woman to lose her lawful influence, and hazard her husband's and child's fondness, by insisting on all the alien laws and customs of her Presbyterian youth. Mrs. Fielding stitched, and plaited, and adorned Bride's spotless dress, shaking her head, but consenting at last, even to the piquant breast-knot. Mrs. Blake looked out the last thing over night, to make sure that the child would have the cream of summer days; and Gracey, the good-humoured, free and easy, picturesque, affectionate maid, with her streeling black hair, her lively black eyes, her wide, expressive coral mouth, and white, white teeth, her little foot, which would not retain a list slipper, but 'bate Banagher' clothed in pumps, cutting in jigs when she got off to a fair, or a christening, or a dance of her own degree. Kind Gracey rose with the lark, and ran round to Councillor Fielding's just to see 'Miss Bride the creature,' as grand as a young queen, as happy as Miss Mary Power of Balreah, the true bride of the day. Miss Bride, all in her best, stepping into the car with the Councillor at this, the top of the morning, and driving off in great state and glee, screaming back, 'Good-bye to you, Gracey, I'll bring you back a big slice of the dreaming bread.'

But Bride and the Councillor did not proceed straight through the fresh-watered streets, with their market-carts and early pedestrians, past the club-houses, whence lights still streamed, and pallid, disordered 'Knights of the Screw,' in their evening

coats, ruffles, and swords—mighty men, both in the senate and over the bottle—strode home; and the Councillor took off his cocked hat, which he wore for the occasion, and imparted to his little daughter, 'that's Curran, Bride, yon's Plunkett;' and even little Bride, in her simplicity, turned away from the great men's degradation; but they drove aside into the court of an old Dublin inn, where the Councillor had agreed to meet and fall in with the bridegroom and his party, and form one imposing procession.

At this halt, Bride had the satisfaction and slight shame of obtaining her portion of the sensation caused by the marriage train, and diffused extensively, through blithe maids like Gracey, waggish grooms, bluff host and hostess, and all the curious travellers. In the meanwhile, the great coach was in preparation, horses and driver were pricked out with vast cockades, front seats and back were packed with Con Boyle's staff. But the main figure was the wild bridegroom, who had slept half-a-dozen winks in his chair, yet who was all alive in his elation; resplendent in his joy; not unlike the fiery sun in the firmament; 'dressed like a prince,' folk cried, in his 'pale blue cloth and white silk,' with the fair, burnished silver lace; scattering money like a prince; and followed by the showers of blessings which few save princes win, and which fell lightly on his reckless, turned head.

Frank was a shadow compared to his brother, yet Frank did not look amiss in his blue and white; and Bride was not at all displeased, but content upon the

whole, when in a temporary difficulty—Con having collected more company than any sublunary coach could hold—the bridegroom's brother relinquished his proper place as one of the supporters of the hero, and came with another gentleman, of no particular note, and begged seats from the Councillor in the Fieldings' car; and then the cavalcade rattled away, accompanied by huzzas—not one groan; Con Boyle standing up in the midst of his crowd, and continually vociferating to the postboys to drive quicker—quicker. And so away and away—by the lodge, and the parks, and the villas—by the boys with their droves of unruly pigs, and the carriers with their loads of goods, and the early coaches with their sleepy passengers and their inimitable whip—away into the cool green country, to expectant Balreah.

That was riding attendance on a happy man, taking part in a gala, belonging to a wedding which all the world could see and envy; it was almost as grand as being married one's self, without the worry and agitation; and if they had not the bridegroom, they had the bridegroom's brother. Why, Bride was almost proud of Frank Boyle this morning; it puzzled her to think how he had troubled her with an inexplicable irritation last night, so that she had felt perverse and hostile all over.

Bride was well instructed in those lessons of dignity and reserve which each young lady was enjoined to cultivate, as at once her closely-riveted chain armour and her well-poised lance of attack. Bride

—in the greenness of her youth, and the rosiness of her hastiness and heartiness, whose sole safeguard was that best, unconscious elevation of purity, simplicity, and truthfulness—fell back the more on this factitious stay of stately mannerism that it was quite foreign to her natural character, whose sweet self-colour and bright groundwork pressed, and burst, and walked boldly forth every now and then—the decorum of crossed hands, and raised head, and sir and ma'am, only prevailing by corresponding fits and snatches. Now Bride had got rid of the suspicious shyness and bristling pride which had lately beset her, and which were charmed to rest by the fragrance of the summer day, the exhilaration of motion, the freedom of the country, the delight of a merry-making, and a bridal of all things.

Bride chatted for the most part to Frank Boyle quite pleasantly, not the less so that he was a better listener than talker, though he did his duty at intervals, and came out in short tales of the sports of Knockmore, and described with craft and humour its bachelor breakfasts, its entertainments in snow-storms, when the scent was off, and no rats to kill in the barns, and no female more refined and literary than old Nelly the cook and housekeeper, and her nieces the chambermaids. But these experiences were ended, and Frank, still though he was for an Irishman, confided to Bride that he did not think he should be needed now in the old house, and as he did not care for a seat at the side of the table when

head and foot were sufficiently filled, he intended to go and seek his fortunes, get a commission, or re-enter the college and read for a brief, since the disqualifications were removed, or rusticate as a gentleman farmer; and then, after such a little confidence, a notable silence supervened between the young speaker and his auditor.

Councillor Fielding's rich voice would be wafted over in the pauses—'Sure my sister Biddy saw one, and she's been a competent authority this many a day, rest her good soul; she died when her name-daughter was in her twos or threes. Bride should have been Biddy, but you see she was our only lass, or lad either, for that matter; and her mother was English, or rather Scotch; but, poor woman, it was no fault of hers; I held to that from the first day I saw her; and she's a decent woman, and as good a wife as a poor fellow need reproach himself with—so, to make a long story short, we have our Bride, and not your Biddy.'

'So best,' spoke out young Frank Boyle, quietly; 'and there is a Scottish St. Bride as well as an Irish St. Bridget.' The reflection might have been reckoned devout from a Catholic, but Bride Fielding got 'rosy red,' and turned her shoulder in her scarlet cloth mantle, much of the shape worn by the peasant girls of her country, and in the style of the opera-cloaked ladies of to-day—and forgot, or appeared to forget, the encroachment before the next turn of the road. On they rolled, not overthrown

in spite of Con Boyle's mad bribes and wagers, everywhere recognised as the great wedding party, bound for Balreah. They were not ashamed of the distinction; they mounted their favours in Dublin, and each pedestrian and horseman, high and low, down to a disreputable fellow in a wrap-rascal and fur cap, whom the very Councillor pronounced a smuggler or illicit distiller, if not a pure footpad, but he daresayed the times had gone hard with him, poor boy, each and all waved a greeting, or clamoured for a sight of the bridegroom; and Con bowed like a prince again, and thrust out his hand where it might be shaken even by the burly down-looking smuggler, dodging the coast-guard, not to escape detection, for who'd turn informer there? but to meet the lieutenant or master alone, on a moonless night, when his pistols were ready primed, and his heart savage as a were-wolf's. No wonder Bride felt herself a unit in a triumphal procession, and grew intoxicated with the sweet, heady fumes of popularity.

There was Balreah at last, with the gatekeeper dancing into the centre of the road, and *hoorahing* like the rest for the gallant bridegroom; and flags of all nations, it may be said—for one not yet rid of crumples and draggles, was suspiciously like the tricolour, and another was an unmistakeable blue-peter, and a third was an electioneering cotton broad-side, with 'Duffey's the man' in huge letters; the whole tied to the rotten sideposts, and flutter-

ing in the summer wind. Balreah has been so often and so well described, that it rises up before the reader, as, to bless untravelled but lively eyes, fired by art and letters, spring out of the distance, all unvisited—the Notre-Dame, the Ducal Palace, the Crypt of the one church, the Horse-Shoe Fall, the Fingal's Cave. Who wants again to read the catalogue of Balreah—its tipsy skittishness, its reckless waste, the broken fences, felled old trees, nibbled, straggling, young wood, rutted road, and wild side garden, where fruit-trees, evergreen bushes, vegetables, and blooming red and white roses, now mingled in chaotic profusion; the cracked flights of stairs, great battered hall door, off the perpendicular, but freshly painted; the pretty sprinkling of boarded and bricked-up windows, despising concealment; the dusty, mouldy, crippled contents of the lumber room, yclept the hall; the vault-like staircase; the ill-matched parcel-faded, parcel-glaring new and old furniture of the public rooms; the primitive simplicity and black antiqueness of the bedrooms?

To-day the avenue was crowded with wayfarers, butchers' and bakers' boys, late tradesmen, hired assistants, fast couriers, guests—guests of every degree, from the bare-legged spalpeens, and wild-headed colleens—the last shoots from the cotter dependents of the mansion, and the ruddy farmers and horsebreakers in dreadnoughts, with silver-handled whips, to the county gentry in their rickety, weather-stained family-coaches, or on horseback

(safest these), in their painters' blues, greens, and scarlets, with their gold and silver laces sparkling in the sun, and the flutter of their women's light muslins and the rustle of their ancient brocades, and the picturesqueness of the pyramids of curls and forests of bows and knots, which after the decadence of powder yet pre-eminently distinguished the higher from the lower classes, by gently swaying or haughtily nodding signals over white foreheads and softly-traced, laughing brows.

More hails and salutes, until it seemed as if the warm air was full of *vivas*, and that the bridegroom would be pulled to pieces and worn off his feet ere he reached his destination, but the athletic supple figure only turned right and left more unweariedly, the proud, roaming eye flamed with more glory. At last, with a sweep and a shout of unmingled satisfaction, the bridegroom's cavalcade distanced the others, and drove up before the house, where the piper was already marching, droning the evening's tunes to a delighted crowd—ragged little urchins, with fingers in their mouths; laughing old paddies, with hands in their pockets; hard-favoured, smoke-dried, buoyant, middle-aged women, into which young Irish beauties vanish; and gipsy damsels, like Merrion-street Grace, staying their flight here and there, and poising themselves (while retaining their hold of their much-required dusters, or the cooks' vainly screamed for spoons, ladles, and saucepans,) almost as gracefully as young Peg Woffington, drawing water from the

Liffey, and attracting the gaze of sharp-sighted, shrewd Madame Violante. At the same moment, from the hall door and lower windows poured forth a torrent of bare-headed gentlemen, the greater part young men—the boys of Balreah, from the sons of the house, shading off to the last tint of cousinship, represented by him who presented 'the horns' eighteen months ago, and dwelt with the family ever since on the credit of the intimacy implied, rather than of the obligation conferred — the turbulent stream just presenting a slight border of girls, for the purpose of welcoming young Bride Fielding of Dublin; but only showing themselves, and then retreating behind doors and window curtains, because they were in all sorts of odd, becoming dishabilles, little hats, fly caps, riding habits, wrappers, and nightgowns—as they were still called on high authority; and moreover they were keeping up for the real festivities, and not going to let themselves down by amusing these idle gentlemen in the breakfast parlour, the garden, the stable, the kennel, with all of which they were quite conversant, and as their assailants would fain have had them do.

The male troop besieged Bride alarmingly; seizing hampers, baskets, and bandboxes under her charge, like robbers, and calling out to Frank Boyle that he had no business where they found him, and that now that he had enjoyed his good luck they were entitled to their share; but Frank stood like a rock among the boisterous waves, and jumped her to the ground

with his own hands; and Bride ran like a lapwing into the house, tingling, not so much with the vice-like gripe that Frank had been compelled to put forth, as at the determined bend of his brow and flash of his blue eyes, as, smiling all the while, he declined to give her up to her old friends.

When Bride was encircled by the women in the hall, and borne among them upstairs, a clear, ringing voice sounded over the banisters, 'Is that Bride Fielding and the things from Dublin?'

'It is Bride and bridegroom, Mary,' answered a laughing chorus; 'as if one bride was not enough for a house; and can't you keep in cover one day?'

A flying foot behind her arrested our Bride's progress, and her heart gave a leap, for Frank Boyle was still running so much in her head, that during the space of half a moment she mistook Con's figure for his younger brother's.

Con, eager, supplicating, in a moment transformed from the conqueror to the slave. Ah, well, the hours of that character were numbered! 'They say I'm not to see her till we meet in church, and it wants two hours till the time fixed—I'll die before then—bid her have pity—she's not let me come for ten days. I'd been drawn with wild horses before I'd lost her so long.'

'Are you coming, Bride?' sounded again the frank, confident, cool voice.

Con did not fall down and worship, but a purple

flush of blood flowed into his pale face, and his lips trembled; positively Bride felt so nervous at the sight of that fever of love, that she ran away from him without according a word in answer to his petition; she was still so possessed with the violence of the paroxysm, that she was conscious of a little shock when she met the other bride, and found her, in spite of Con Boyle's wild service, no goddess or angel, but a pretty, gay Irishwoman.

'So best,' as Frank Boyle had muttered of something else; for a more delicate or a more powerful nature, a keener spirit or a tenderer heart, might not have stood the violence of Con Boyle's passion, taken it quietly, mastered it, foreknowing the turn of the tide, prepared for that too, and been quite equal to the end — the part of the independent, resolute, respected, well-enough liked, and kindly-enough treated, but certainly neither fondly cherished, nor deferentially courted woman, not so much the wife of Con Boyle as the mistress of Knockmore.

Black eyes had Mary Power, black as sloes; and a white skin, white as the hawthorn blossom; with that vivid coral on the lip and cheek, which, by the law of contrast, lends a hardness as well as a brilliance to this description of beauty. She was a middle-sized woman; had not the bone which the Irish, like the Highlanders, prized highly; but her bust, throat, hands, and feet were perfect.

'Oh, bother!' cried Mary, very nonchalantly, when

Bride, blushing, and hesitating, and ready to run away again, delivered the lover-like message. 'Can't he behave like other people? It is not usual for bride and bridegroom to meet before the ceremony; Judy Macree stuffed that and a thousand other notions into our heads last night, when we sat up and watched out my girl days. Mother dear thought us all snug in bed; and it was not bad fun, and worth a sleep once in a while, though I'm sure we've had no rest this many a day. Isn't there a great gathering, Bride? Nothing like it since Lord Ormonde's body came this way. You have not crushed the lace, Bride, or broken the spangles, I hope; it was shameful in them to forget them. Oh, dear! after all, Judy or no Judy, I must go down to that boy for one moment, or he'll be getting into mischief, and making a mess of it.' And off went Mary, gathering up her homely stuff-skirts, and humming the tune which the drone of the pipes was blaring outside.

'She may just as well go to him,' comments Susie Power—a sister, with corresponding philosophy; 'no one else can manage him. Besides, she has been putting her hand to one thing or another the whole morning; she will not sit still; and Judy said, also, that it was bad luck for a bride to work. I declare, when I get married I'll lie in bed all day, to escape ill omens; wont you, Bride Fielding? There's the clock striking; Teddy Clarke set it a-going last night for the occasion. Oh! never mind, all you

people. Mary wont forget to dress; though it would be all the same to Con Boyle, since he's clean bewitched. I'd be frightened out of my wits to have a man go into such a fury about me.'

Mrs. Power was a very easy-tempered, indolent woman, only a little excited, active, and earnest, on the yearly recurrence of the fair, or on a family wake, wedding, or christening. Few had done less for their families, few entertained slighter scruples with regard to the comfort and enjoyment of a multitude of incongruous guests, and rarely was a mother more petted, a hostess more praised. Undoubtedly, the let-alone system has its advantages; and here it was particularly refreshing after the tyranny of old Ned Power, whose fiery temper had been aggravated and rendered inveterate by long years of hard riding, hard drinking, mortgages increasing, ready money disappearing — constituting Balreah, so far as his influence extended, other than a Paradise.

But Ned Power was now in his best colours, for he was hospitable to his heart's core, and his violence only made his welcome more emphatic.

Mary Power came up rather more slowly than she had gone down, and sat down for a moment and did cry a little—truly! The reason of the marvel was, either that poor Con was such a fool, or that his folly would pass speedily—not that she was leaving Balreah, not for her indulgent mother, or her merry brothers and sisters, or the harsh father whom yet

Mary could move beyond any other member of the family, or the junketings, and dances, and frolics of the light-hearted juvenile section of the household, until then unbroken, or the broad simple fondness of piper, nurse, spinners, knitters, liverymen, or the faint sweet memories of the wild free days of childhood, Arab-like on Irish ground,—but one burst of bright fast-falling tears, uncontrollable, unaccountable, even from that commonplace, satisfied, hearty beauty, for the rarity, engrossing and exacting as it proved, the deep lush blossom of whose overpowering fragrance she had but now complained—Con Boyle's love.

The ceremony itself was wonderfully orderly and quiet for Balreah—and Con Boyle as principal performer. It was not only a family and individual compact, but a religious sacrament—reverence sobered even this assembly, and so there was a lull in the turmoil, and all the gravity and decorum of the day were crushed into one hour. The company were marshalled to the Catholic church in the neighbourhood without accident; the women felt that now was their peculiar time—they were at last to do something serious, as well as to achieve the grand act of the day—thus, they gave the cue—drove to the porch, marched up the aisle, the very giddiest with instinctive discipline and solemnity.

Mrs. Power, with her train, her mantua, her satin hat, restrained her broad smile, and put her cambric handkerchief (with only the least rent in the corner,

by which she could hold it) to her full mouth and rosy-tinged brow rather than to her well-opened eyes.

Bride Fielding, with the awe of the sacred building upon her, strove not to think of the creases in the unfailing white gown over the richly-worked petticoat, and the nice wreaths round the pocket-holes, or to squint at quite a branch of blush roses poised above her pretty brow, among the chestnut curls all brushed to one side.

Con Boyle's bride, like all other easy brides, managed her lace, her looped-up skirt, her real diamond shoe-buckles, and the perfect battlements of bows. knots, and blossoms which crowned her, very well; and Con stood white and still at last, when he grasped her slender fingers, and received the priest's blessing; and for the moment the other men were sympathetically and devoutly silent, or whispering and laughing in their sleeves. But the instant the wedded pair issued from the church, the uproar and joviality blazed forth anew. The lookers-on cheered lustily, fired shots, waved flags, clamoured for the bride's ribands, produced bottles and drank healths, stamped and leapt, and all but performed jigs on consecrated ground. Con drove off his wife like the wind; his old fellows tried to race with him; and there they were shouting, competing, laughing, struggling, and winning the game, the whole distance to the hall door. Bride Fielding had her breath well-nigh carried away, and was dreadfully frightened, and never quite sure

how many young ladies and gentlemen were sitting and standing in the dilapidated open chaise, which, in spite of its eccentric pair—a broken-winded, ancient mare, and a snapping, kicking filly—Frank Boyle drove second up the avenue. She knew that Frank was the charioteer, because it was the same hands which flung away the frayed ribands, that caught her in the quick firm hold, and yet put her down so softly.

CHAPTER IV.

A BRIDE PROPER AND BRIDE FIELDING—(*continued*).

THERE was a hurried dressing for dinner, and a scramble for places, by no means abundant in proportion to the candidates, but a circumstance in itself redolent with mischief. There was the inimitable side-table to which Bride levanted, not in coquetry, she fancied; but all at once scared by some one standing up by a seat of honour, and looking eagerly round with a couple of inquisitive blue eyes. Then ensued the indescribable commotion, the 'lashings and lavings' of roast and stew, the full justice to pie and pudding, ale-jug and claret-pitcher, with the hoarse bass of the host, and the mild treble of the hostess—perpetually calling on some one to eat and drink, interspersed with the cross fire of comical remark and ready reply, in no country in the world franker and racier. They drank the health, the great toast of the evening, so blithely, gave it with such warm wishes and sly warnings, a brimming bumper accompanied by thunders of applause; and it was replied to so pleasantly by the bride's mode-

rate blushes and smiles—all the fairer that they were a shade shy, and by Con's short ardent thanks, when he no longer cheered for his bride, but united her cause with his own, and termed her, oh! very proudly, Mrs. Boyle of Knockmore, and looked for once in his life—the wan, wild young man—at blissful rest. The young wife did not shed another tear, but some of the women broke down a little behind backs, and considering their emotion out of place, wiped their moist eyes stealthily; but depend upon it, the height of happiness is an affecting spectacle in this inconstant world.

Minor toasts by the dozen, sentiments very romantic and a little mysterious from the most stalwart men and giggling women. 'May the friends of our youth be our companions in age.' 'Green Erin—her green gown and green girdle.' And ladies gave gentlemen, and gentlemen ladies, with names and local habitations complete. The elderly dames instanced the priest of the parish, the member for the county, even the next village doctor —the opposite sex matching them with the most renowned Lady Bountiful in a circuit of ten miles, the antiquated belle of the district now chaperoning grown-up daughters, and in the case of one friendly, jocose fellow, with his own indignant wife. But the young ladies proposed bachelors (you may read in *The Children of the Abbey* how Amanda felt herself under the necessity of naming Sir Charles, thus rending the heart of Mortimer) — the young gentlemen, maidens; and

with brave ingenuousness, not unfrequently mentioned the wished-for husband, the hoped-for wife. Sally Dill, the rival beauty with Mary Power, was daringly generous and constant in proclaiming Bob MacMahon, whom they all knew she wanted to follow to the ends of the world, while her father and mother forbade him their house, and carried her only where they supposed he was not to be met, and the toast was drunk with enthusiasm, the frowning individuals excepted; for what can inflame an Irishman like a beautiful woman, true to her love, and magnanimous in its avowal? Talk not to him of obedience, meekness, and silence; he will retaliate with the text, 'Parents, provoke not your children to anger;' he will cry, 'Give me the girl who will own me before the whole world, as noble Sally has confessed Bob (he will cry like a woman to-morrow because he cannot shed his blood for her), and I will let every shrinking, docile damsel go by. There was the rich Milesian nature, the fine Irish spirit, I want no Saxon slave—neither for wife nor daughter.' And Tom Farquhar merrily and honestly emptied the glasses to brisk little Jenny Davidson, seated by his side, as she had been at every gathering for the last half dozen years, so much at home there that she was not a bit put about by the natural reference, and now to be buckled to him for better, for worse—at whose wedding, indeed, the most of the present company were to officiate before the next moon was out. But when the chairman vociferated for Frank Boyle's

lady, Frank, in place of unveiling that obscure figure, merely caught up the words, and repeating with emphasis, 'The lady,' preserved his secret. Well, his reticence was a novelty, and passed as a piece of wit; but it sent one young head bending over a side-table with a torrent of blushes burning into the fair skin. Bride was terribly sorry for these blushes; they thoroughly spoilt her pleasure just then. She felt as if she must be the weakest, most improper girl in the world, to be guilty of them; she was certain she hated that vain, strange young fellow, the groomsman, who excited them, and she was in mortal terror lest they should be found out.

But the grand affair to the ladies, and, in fact, to most of the gay gentlemen, was the long dance which was to finish the feast appropriately. The former quitted the dining-room as early as possible, eager to enter on their own field and reap their laurels; the latter did not tarry to look into the wine-cup this night, because it was a point with all, save a desperate swiller, to see the bride open the ball, and for the last time dance on an equality with her old companions. The drawing-room, or Queen Anne's parlour of the house, was cleared out and garnished; old streamers, more flags, fresh arbutus, drooping roses—the piper and a couple of fiddlers already at fierce contest on an appropriate national effort, 'The Irish Wedding,' which, in the style of some of the German pieces, and of other Irish airs, such as 'The Garden of Plants,' (which represents the planting,

manuring, weeding, and digging of potatoes,) by a series of wonderful sounds, acted in the liveliest manner a domestic drama, and was literally a tamer, homelier, and purely instrumental opera.

The whole company of retainers to the last degree —from the cook, with her chief labours done, in her chintz, her roquelaure, and her huge cap, to little Dan, the bird-boy, for the first time in breeches— lined the lobbies and the doorway, to enjoy the sight, comment on the company, and exchange greetings with friends.

'Good luck to you, Mr. Patsy, and may yours be the legs that will never tire this blessed night.' 'A fine evening to you, my lady. Musha! there's the mouth made to be kissed, and a foot!—the instep forms a bow like a half-moon, and the clock of the stocking covers the whole shin;—that foot would dance on my hand, Corny!'

What a dance that was, when Con Boyle stood at the top of the room with his bride, and carried her triumphantly down the close-packed lane of couples —and the drawing-room was no closet either. Well for them that none thought of John Fitz-James of Munster and his bride Isabel Butler, dancing, not a hundred years before, the same marriage-dance, until he dropped down dead at the foot—at her feet; and the poor widowed maid and her friends clung to the hope that he was spirited away by the fairies, and employed charm and incantation to win him back—in vain. Isabel Butler would grow weary watching for

her fond bridegroom, and 'long, long greet' ere John Fitz-James should clasp her in the arms stretched out to receive her.

Frank Boyle did not dance—at least, not till late in the evening. This was a glaring irregularity; when men—learned judges and distinguished officers—punctiliously preserved and practised their dancing-masters' instructions, and supposed they could not be elegant unless they could walk through a figure or two on the floor, even when they were not inclined to revel in a country dance. Frank hardily excused himself on the plea of the keen country air of Knockmore, the morning sport, the evening lack of partners, if not fatigue,—in short, rusticity and want of habit—an argument contradicted by Con's proficiency. But Con did support the odd intimation that the groomsman did not care for dancing. Half of the ladies in the room thenceforth set him down as dangerous; a gambler, a drunkard, a moping, maddish fellow, or—hush!—a rebel. The boldest of the other half curtsied in passing him, and assailed him with the challenge, 'I'm dancing to you, sir;' but he only bowed and laughed, and turned aside the joke.

But Frank Boyle's indifference might not serve him amiss in the long run, as anything out of the common is interesting—just as, you know, a young man who dances from twilight to cockcrow, if he can find the opportunity, and that with hearty good will, and is at the same time one of the crack men in a room, the best connected, bravest, and

cleverest, is worth speaking about at this toll of the clock. Then, if Frank had danced, he could not have danced every dance—why, not a third of the dances—with pretty, genteel (in those days, genteel meant something, and a very nice thing too, not merely the antipodes of vulgar) young Bride Fielding of Dublin, who was engaged three deep before he could follow her into the ball-room; and, as Bride danced everything, from the true regal minuet, in which she was so stately and particular, to 'The Hare in the Corn' and 'Shawn Bue,' in which she was so easy and careless, he could walk after her, obtain her fan, compel a word or a laugh occasionally, grossly defrauding her partners; so that if Con's story had been reversed, and the whole batch, a full tithe of the room, as gallant men as ever lived, had turned and stood at bay, and challenged Frank to sword and pistol in the next field, or at Donnybrook, the following morning, he would have justly deserved it for his usurpation. This abominable behaviour was noticed —not resentfully, for these were good-natured fire-eaters; and though Bride had many admirers, she had happily no such violently-enamoured and selfish servant as Con Boyle; but there were significant looks, under-toned, plain, dry, humorous speeches, more and more trying to poor Bride, who yet endured the cross like a martyr, and, perhaps, like many martyrs, would have been sorry to lay it down altogether.

At last the groomsman danced, joined in an old

measure, descending down from courtiers to clowns, but not yet too rude for ladies and gentlemen. A circle was formed, a lady in the centre; the music played; she flung her handkerchief to a chosen squire —he picked it up, entered the ring, turned her in time to the tune, or saluted her, just as he happened to be a bold man or she a gentle woman, and withdrew her into the common ranks, to make way for another couple to enact the same little play. No harm in the world, but some smartness, some shyness, some condescension, and plenty of archness, coyness, and aggression. Bride Fielding stood laughing, and colouring up, and dallying with the signal, the mark of all eyes, when, by a feat of skill, or a chance accident, Frank Boyle arrested the lightly fluttering flag, and diverted it in his direction. 'A cheat,' cried the dancers; but when the pretender only swung Bride once round, and lifted her hand to his lips, let her off nearly, and Bride entered no protest, they suffered the wrong to pass unchecked, but not unchronicled. There were very knowing as well as very obliging fellows present there, that night—and when they sat after supper, and the mirth grew fast and furious, a laughing accuser rose, and made a mock complaint of art and craft being at work within the room, and perhaps a little violence to boot, but endorsed the company's magnanimous pardon for the offence, and proved it by filling a bumper (the third that week) to the mistress of Mr. Frank Boyle of Knockmore, coupling with the toast a name which

they were all happy to know, and which they held in honour, that of Miss Fielding of Dublin. At that bluff piece of wit and impudence, there burst forth such acclamations, as if every man and woman had then and there received his and her heart's desire.

The deed was done; whether there might be any prosecution of the suit, whether it might be rejected, however Bride Fielding and her friends might view it, Bride's name was coupled with Frank Boyle's, and would ring thus in unison at church and market, and at every hospitable table in the country, until one or other gave the lie to the assertion by contracting other ties; nay, in spite of later associations, the first combination might echo to the last—old men and women might say, dotingly, 'This was the fashion when poor Frank Boyle had Bride Fielding of Dublin for his mistress; he wore it, or she wore it, and they were a good deal noticed, as people were, in their circumstances, in those days.'

Frank Boyle did not deny the allegation, though he bit his lips sharply at its publication; nay, he drank the pledge manfully, as Con had been wont to drink to Mary Power, and submitted with a grace to Con's incoherent condolences and congratulations.

What could the Fieldings do? The Councillor laughed pleasantly, as at a good joke against his little daughter, wherewith to startle his quiet wife on the morrow. Bride thought she must faint, but did not fulfil the necessity; after all, it was not her fault;

it did not compromise her, though all the world reported that young Frank Boyle of Knockmore had flung her his heart, as he would have had her drop him her handkerchief, on short notice; she need not pick it up, as he had clutched the token; and what a fine story it would be for Mrs. Blake, and Dolly Nugent, and Gracey; and how they would talk and tease her—why, everybody knew it; and what a foolish, foolish fellow this strong, aspiring Frank Boyle must be, to make a work about her, in her plain dress, compared with the other girls, and with the tan on her face, and her stupidity and silliness—of course, she was stupid and silly—she could not act or sing like Dolly Nugent, she had not read a line for a month, save in her Bible and the *Ladies' Magazine;* and he had a smattering of Latin, very likely a great deal more than a smattering, and contradicted the priest, and rode—they said none rode and shot like these young Boyles of Knockmore. What could he see in her? She rather thought he had a good figure for a man; and he was sensible, though he was quiet; when he spoke, people listened. He was connected with the Clonmellicks, of the best blood in these parts—far above them, who were simply barristers and North-country folks; and if he had lived ten years sooner, he might have been 'out' for his religion and his country. Pretty, unsophisticated Bride was in a dangerous way.

But the night was waning, and already the bower-maidens for the nonce had withdrawn with the bride,

and when they returned, wonderful to tell, it was to announce with sly peals of laughter, and fresh excitement and glee, that on Bride Fielding the mystic lot had fallen; that, in spite of Jenny Davidson and her banns all but written by the clerk, Bride was not only to keep the promise given at her baptism, but to be the very next bride in the room. The prophecy was far from being realized; but, in the meantime, little Bride, fairly beaten, was reproduced in actual consternation; the fates seemed suddenly linked hard against her; she began to doubt her power of resistance, to question what she might not do to-morrow. Therefore, she was there resigned to pay the forfeit—too dumb-founded to heed it much. Each of these buoyant, exulting men would advance, and touch the successful maiden's cheek; they had brothers' hearts to her, they would have kissed her little shoe, the roughest and coarsest would have protected her from injury.

'So, I'm to lose you soon, my darling,' cries the Councillor, who happened to be near her, setting the example, and hugging her fondly, without dreaming of putting an interdict on the custom and the claims of others; but, 'Shame, shame!' cries Frank Boyle, vehemently; 'stand back, gentlemen!'

Bride looks wonderingly into his kindling blue eyes, and suddenly shrinks within herself, trembles all over, hides her face with her hands, and bursts into tears before the whole company; and those joyous, determined creditors, who would not have

waived their debt for a line of muskets or bayonets, cancel it instantly at the sight of a girl's sensitive bashfulness and timid want of control.

'Oh, for shame, Bride! what nonsense is this,' protests the Councillor, very much affronted and almost angry, almost right-down angry, 'to refuse the gentlemen their due; to treat them as if they were a sorry set of grooms; and worse, to act as if there was anything in it but innocence and play? There, I'm ashamed of you—behaving like a woman of the world, or a baby. Take your kiss this minute, Shane, and let the rest follow.'

'No, no, Councillor, we want no imposition of the law here; if the tax is not granted willingly, it is not worth a farthing.' And Bride, very much puzzled at herself, and vexed at the accident, and out of sorts with the Councillor, is generously set free. But, observe, it is the denial, and not the bestowal, of a freedom and favour, that is with justice regarded as a scandal.

The dawn was no longer a rosy, tremulous, secret thing, it was an open yellow splendour; the great beneficent sun was greeting the revellers through every chink and open portal. All but Irish ladies would have looked faded and jaded, all but Irish gentlemen would have shown flagging and inconstancy; even the last began to talk of the fishing, the field work, the song at the tambour-frame, the Werter bow from the slipper, still red or yellow, as in the reign of Queen Anne, with which they were

to call for their partners to-morrow. To-morrow, did you say? Sure this very day, in time for a share in the squire's early dinner, or in the evening, in order to help out the carpet-dance, got up on the plea of the cousins come across the bog to stay over Mary Power's wedding.

'The raking pot of tea' was very welcome before the hurry-scurry after cloaks, hats, and carriages. The Councillor took natural possession of his daughter, and carried her off to their car, where he had already stowed Johnny Lambert and the late Councillor Moore's family, filling every hole and corner; and they were swept away from Balreah, and the poteen glamours of its wedding, as fast as their versatile Irish horse-flesh—fortunately *they* had not been dancing all night—would allow. They were conscious of the sharp chilliness of even a sunny summer morning in this the best of weather, which old Ned Power had been lucky enough to have for the wedding in his house; curious, it was old Ned Power's wedding now, not Con Boyle and Mary's. They had dwindled down in a twinkling into ordinary married folks, only made much of by their uxorious friends, until they were despatched with the last good wishes next week to the bran-new welcome home at Knockmore. And Frank Boyle was left behind Bride, scarcely able to secure a brief good-bye; no more connected with Bride; retaining nothing belonging to her but that lost mitten, which she knew was somewhere in his keeping. But Frank

Boyle was coming back to Dublin, to remain some weeks at least, perhaps to settle in the city; he was not going again to Knockmore, not for a permanency. Bride was aware of that little fact, though the Councillor was driving on, happy, like the most of us, in his ignorance.

CHAPTER V.

AN IRISH COURTSHIP.

'MY life, Bride, you are the girl to have such a fine young spark over head and ears in love with you, and the father so glum, poor man; faiks, I never saw Councillor Fielding put out; no, not that morning when I handed him his breakfast-cup before he met Black Connor—we always called him black, to distinguish him from his cousin; and when he had to say, "My lad, Connor, you must fire; for it is I who have come out this morning with the pure purpose of being shot. I'm sure you'll do me that favour, and no stammering, when you hear that some rascals are whispering in court that it is from want of spirit I don't quarrel.* If you had not upset that glass of beer, for which, remember, whatever happens, I'm always obliged to you, I'd have needed to go into the street, crying, 'Black is the white of my eye; who says black is not the white of my eye?' like the fighting boys at

* *Life and Times of Sir Jonah Barrington.*

the fair." And Connor fired, but could not hit for the laughing. You are the father's daughter, Bride, dear; you've met a good foot, or a lucky eye, or the fairies have carried you south to kiss the stone of Blarney. You, not eighteen, and the talk of Dublin!'

It is to be feared that Bride thought herself well off —poor, simple, impressionable lass, with an Irish girl's peculiar quick feeling to praise and admiration. You see we are apt to desire fame, great and small—that the place which knows us may resound with us living, and echo for a while, at least, our histories after they are ended. Within certain limits there is no fault to be found with the great motive power. Bride's fame, the renown of the blooming, fresh-hearted girl, was then at least held to consist in the length and strength of her conquests. Bride's lists were not very crowded yet, for she was a charming girl among many charming girls; but here was a paragon of a lover. 'True, for you,' as Mrs. Blake granted, 'he only kicked his heels at the side of his brother's table, and had his way to make in the world,'—that long, hard, weary way, to many pilgrims; but, what of that? Young lovers were penniless, of course; they worked out their path in life for, or mostly with, their partners, like knight errants or old invading Goths. What did Councillor Fielding and his wife expect for their Bride? A full-blown councillor, with his hands behind his back, beneath his gown, to hide his wealth of briefs, like her father, and as old as her father, a cold-

hearted English subaltern, of good estate, quartered for a year in the Castle—a duke at once. Mrs. Blake wished Bride, the jewel, all honour, but she hated mercenariness—yes, she did, as much as Bride herself; and she believed, to her last sigh, that she had drawn a prize in life when she won taciturn, whimsical Blake, for whom she underwent the toil of the boarding-house.

But though Bride's was not an unusual or unpardonable vanity—no, no, poor dear lass! she did and said, and allowed to be said and done to her, many things that, harmless in themselves, not the most guileless girl, better trained in the present light, would permit. It was all that enthusiasm and fancy—the same that made the women bow down before the pasteboard kings, applaud the coarse cruelties of duelling, run away with their lovers, and abandon their parents. They would look up to kings among men, they would have heroes, they were captivated by true love; and it does not seem that the instinct was in fault, it was its misapplication and abuse. So one must be forbearing with Bride, even though she should not be wise, or provident, or submissive, or exactly what one would expect from a good, true girl of the nineteenth century.

The Dublin and the London of that day, when races and Vauxhall were still irresistible, were not quite the cities with which we may be acquainted. It was not many years since Kelly from Galway leaped upon the stage, and pursued the actress George

Anne Bellamy behind the scenes, as far as the lock-fast refuge of her dressing-room, and in a succeeding scene, in company with his accomplices, stripped, gutted, and burnt the interior of the theatre to his best ability—outrages for which he was fined five hundred pounds. Not so long ago since Lord Villars shot Child's (the banker's) horses, to stay the man's pursuit of his heiress. Beautiful, miserable Mary King, who filled the measure of an Irishwoman's misfortunes, had but lately walked the streets with the daughter of another house—spirited, faithful Charlotte Lawless, pleading bravely against her time-serving father, in behalf of the rash, generous young brother, kept in safe durance with the ugly name of imprisonment, till Irish manias were thoroughly forgotten.

Therefore, when Frank Boyle was so imperious and inconsiderate in his approaches as to provoke the apprehension of her friends, Bride was not seriously dismayed or offended, as Harriet Grandison, or any delicate-minded, discreet young lady who copied her, might have been. She was no more disgusted than is the country girl at her merry-making, when at a certain stage the smartest boy leads her out and crowns her with the krinkum or cake, for the purpose, set on a pole at the cabin door, and proclaims her, to all who choose to listen, the queen of the feast. Bride cried out at the notoriety, but she did not put a stop to it, as one always fancies the victim in such a delicate case might do. She

was abundantly provoking, no doubt—would not go to the Blakes' when he wanted her, would not appear on the College-green as she had led him to suppose, vanished from the window unaccountably, talked and laughed with other squires aggravatingly; but she was for ever meeting young Frank Boyle abroad, and you'll not persuade an impartial person that could not have been prevented, especially where the one was a native of the city and the other wild from the country.

Frank Boyle was no wiser than his generation. The reader may have tried in vain to believe in the spectacle of young Barrington riding down the street of the county town, the day after the circuit, with the judge's curls fastened to his saddle, and distributed afterwards among his companions and their partners at the assize ball; but it was a fact, that when Bride Fielding first sported a primrose bow in her turned-up hat, Frank Boyle rode and won the second heat at Lord Clonmellick's steeple-chase, with primrose streamers in his cap, everybody knew in whose honour. Did he not go to the wild, witty party which the Barrys dignified by the name of a masked ball, where Bride appeared in a striped linen jacket, and petticoat, and little cap, and basket of stones for eggs, complete—a perfect costume, thanks to Gracey; and where Mrs. Blake got him an invitation by begging, bribing, and bullying every authority; and did he not wear a straw cross of St. Bridget, whom the girls called, in all love and kindness, Miss Biddy,

on his green coat, and it no more the 2nd of February than King William's day, and he a Catholic too? Frank stopped Bride in Capel-street in the face of her father, and paid her his compliments hanging on the Councillor's arm. He was as bad as Con, and worse; for, against frequent experience, we expect these extravagant demonstrations to be performed solely by your Sir Harry Wildairs, while they are as often the unexpected outbreaks of quiet-mannered, rather silent, and otherwise reasonable fellows, like Frank Boyle, supporting themselves on their younger brother's patrimonies, meagre enough, since few families increase such settlements.

Bride said it was horrible persecution, she had no more peace in life, he was an impudent fellow, she would have nothing to say to him; but she spoke to him the very next time they met, or allowed him to address her, perhaps, in order to come to an understanding with her conscience.

Frank Boyle had re-entered Trinity, and with the inconceivable, manly coolness of that generation, he had gone to Councillor Fielding and proposed at the same time to rank as a candidate for Bride's hand; offered in the utmost sincerity and simplicity his pennilessness and his bravery to the girl of seventeen. The writer does not say that the Councillor would not have done better to entertain the overture, contract Bride to the future barrister, physician, or clergyman, as the case might be—nay, marry them and pack them into lodgings up three flights of

stairs, where many a hardy young couple vegetated—labouring and waiting together for fortune to enable them to burst upon the world yet, as a well-matched, prosperous pair. But the Councillor had taken an alarm, and strongly backed by his cautious Ulster wife, opposed the connexion. It was the first time that the Councillor had protested, except as a legal form, against anything short of absolute meanness, vice, and profanity; but if he had not been long-sighted and close-fisted for himself, he was determined to be all that was shrewd and firm on Bride's account. Like most artificial despots, the Councillor overdid his part, and rode on the top of his commission. He did not come to a violent rupture with Frank Boyle—not at all, they never thought of that—the two parted amicably, swearing an honourable enmity, recognising each other from that moment foes, but bearing no malice—on the contrary, secretly admiring each other's spirit. How could good, sweet-natured, free Councillor Fielding hate a fine young lad for loving and following his Bride? What might tempt earnest Frank Boyle to hate his intended father-in-law for meaning to preserve his treasure? How did Councillor Fielding know that Frank would strive, grind, and starve, to compel success? How could he, the beggar, expect him, the benefactor, to be willing at once to give up sweet, honest, quick-witted Bride?

But the Councillor did not draw his battle so fairly with his daughter, or the girl was hot-headed,

and thin-skinned, and very ticklish, as girls will be on such subjects; and although she relished the warfare as carried on by herself, she was jealous of any foreign interference with the adventurer, and easily wounded for his sake. There was awkwardness and fretting between Bride Fielding and her indulgent, joyous father, and grave, still mother—an approach at least to altercations, bitterness, commands, defiance—an unseemly bit of the picture; but if the painter had sufficient skill, the looker-on would see that there remained order under the disorder, harmony beneath the discord—that the rebellion, though it might very well proceed to extremities, did not strike to the root, was more loud than deep. Poor, foolish Bride might go on to prove undutiful and disobedient, to the utmost verge of these errors—might fly in the face of her natural guardians, and fling away their protection; but there was, nevertheless, real reverence, confidence, and regard, between the contending parties—aye, enough to survive hard rubs on both sides, enough to bring about entire reconciliation after years of exile from each other's home, sight, lips—from all, save each other's hearts.

As all young men seemed to make love then, all young girls seemed to listen more or less, just as there were independent, affected Mrs. Anastasias, who went about with their sonnets and odes in their workbags, and fired them off at audiences, and yet were mostly very intelligent, and rather sharp women in the depths of their composition.

An incident that happened at this time among their intimate acquaintances clenched the state of matters between Bride and her friends. Bride Fielding ran into the Blakes' one wet morning to get Dolly Nugent to give her some advice on the apron which she was working in an elegant pattern of shamrocks, roses, lilies, and sunflowers, but Dolly had not been downstairs that day, seeing they had made a night of it the previous evening, in a farewell party (got up on the moment, else Bride would have been sure to be present) to Mr. Carew, after he came in from his benefit, and before he started for his tour in the south. Dolly was sleeping off the gapes, and the blues, and the yellows, as Mrs. Nugent facetiously added; for even true Irish beauties were liable to betray orange among their colours after so many healths drank at their knees. Mrs. Nugent went to her daughter's room to seek her, but in place of returning with Dolly refreshed and gracious, the boarding-house propriety was disturbed by her cries. Mrs. Nugent had not found her daughter stone dead, as in her rage she might have preferred; but Dolly was certainly stolen or strayed; and in confirmation a letter was soon picked up, informing her respected parents—parents were uniformly respected in letters then—that she had been joined, for better, for worse, that rainy morning, by a hedge priest, not a hundred miles from Dublin, to her dear, distinguished Mr. Carew, who had been driven to adopt this mode of uniting two souls formed

to become one, in the fear that the honoured authors of her being might, through an unworthy prejudice, fail to perceive of their own accord the unmerited promotion she had attained, and the brilliant path that lay before her. In the meantime she had accepted an engagement, procured for her by her husband, to appear with him in 'Barbarossa,' and 'Alexander,' before the company at Castle-Comer, and she hoped her father and mother would contribute something to supply her deficiency in royal robes, and be prepared to receive and forgive her and her partner, when they returned to Dublin for Mr. Carew's winter characters.

Mrs. Nugent was furious, Captain Nugent sorely cut up. Although it was true, as Steele said of Wilkes, that Carew could 'beseech gracefully, approach respectfully, pity, mourn, and love with the utmost beauty,' and the Nugents had heretofore appreciated these advantages as only the Irish at the end of the last century could do, still this was not the match that they had hoped for their beautiful and accomplished daughter; and at the first shock they were inconsolable. A word more about Dolly Nugent. Her fate in life was not a happy one. With all her natural charms, failing to establish a regular footing on the boards, the mortification gnawed at her heart, while the obscurity into which she saw herself sinking, and the struggles inevitable in her husband's precarious profession, were distasteful and disgusting to her. She had been spoilt by

an early diet of flattery, whose poison even the village beauty may swallow, and she wanted that sweet adaptability and pious submission, not to the decisions of parents, but to the will of Providence, which may be found in the energetic and passionate, which Bride and Mrs. Blake inherited, and without which no tender and virtuous woman's nature is complete. In course of time, Mrs. Nugent sought injudiciously and evilly to annul her daughter's vows, or at least to withdraw her from her husband; and Dolly, capricious and cruel, now allowed her to prevail. Poor Carew fought on in his own field, down-hearted and desperate. 'She has twice deserted her friends; she will not rest there,' he, too, groaned; 'she will leave them again, as she has left them already, and as she has now given up me;' and his miserable prophecy was fulfilled. Down, down sank beautiful, gifted Dolly Nugent, shining at last like a baleful star with an unhallowed lustre, blighting her first lover's career, public as well as private, and urging him on to recklessness, ruin, and the grave. Not a pillar, a crown to her sisterhood, as her ambitious mother had fondly dreamt, but a fingerpost, a warning to all heady children, stage-struck heroines, runaway brides—not quite fairly, for did not Bessy Surtees elope with the coal agent's son, and end Lady Eldon? and might not Dolly have aspired at least to the part of as patient and devoted a wife as the sallow or blowzy woman, who owned the shabbiest walking gentleman or scene-

painter on the stage, and consistently slaved herself to death for him and his children? If only she had got grace to love her pasteboard king to the last, the moral might have been written in letters less ghastly and more correct.

Those who knew Carew and Dolly Nugent were not astonished at the result; declared that friends and fortune had worked for it; and as the clever, captivating actor was the more popular of the two, the world did not think the lady so unfortunate as her puffed-up father and mother considered her. But the parents afflicted with frisking, shying, bolting young daughters, laid the warning to heart, and determined to draw in their outposts, and tighten their cordon. Councillor Fielding's jolly contentment was more and more ruffled, poor Mrs. Fielding grew positively grim, and began to stand guard upon Bride abroad as well as at home—deserting the sea-coal fire, which she had cherished as one of her best friends for the last twenty years, as a sacrifice to maternal love and duty.

But Bride found plenty of encouragers and abettors, from Mrs. Blake to Gracey, and up again through sad Lady Clonmellick, sharp Trelawney, and cool Blake himself. Matron, maid, and man plunged in to her rescue with the most *naïve* disinterestedness and disregard of consequences. 'What were the Fieldings thinking of? Did they imagine their ancestors had ruled in bawns and courts, and had their deaths foretold by banshees like

the real topping gentry? Every one was aware, of course, that the Councillor's blood was thick enough; but, after all, he had never been more than the sprout of the sprout of a great tree, like one of those allegoric trees in Scripture, and surely not above mating with the Boyles of Knockmore. What were they thinking of? The alliance was an honour to the Dublin branch of the Fieldings. How cruel they were to the boy and girl; just like the North-country manners, to think that he'd give in to them! Could not they afford them board, if nothing better offered, till the Duke got him a commission, or something else turned up—such a handsome, spirited boy, and pretty, cheery girl, I'd warrant they'd fight the battle with the best of them if they got the chance. Ah! but they'd beat the stiff-necked, stingy old folks yet. Good luck to them, and to him who lent them a helping hand, and serve the heads of the family right.'

Thus pricked and spurred by innumerable wagers and promises on the one hand, and propelled forward by clumsy power on the other, Bride went greater lengths than it is quite easy to justify. She walked with Frank Boyle by appointment about nothing at Finglas and other places; she corresponded with him clandestinely, if that could be called clandestine where half the city knew of the effusions; and once she actually paid him a flying visit at his lodgings; but that was under the wing of Mrs. Blake, and strictly disguised in a strange

cap and wrap, and when he sat sick and suffering, and must have run the risk of being driven into a brain fever of gratitude and delight. That was terrible; but, if we mistake not, some Dublin belles were found to have bestowed the same condescension on the late Sir Charles Napier, when he had broken his leg, once by accident, and a second time by design, in order to remedy the first slovenly setting, which would have rendered the handsome, gallant young soldier a cripple for life. It is vouched that in neither case did any damage accrue from the irregular proceeding. And, privately speaking, the sombre, twilight lodging-room, with its foils and boxing-gloves, cocks' spurs, whips, and top-boots, mixed with its respectable sprinkling of books; its stalwart young invalid roused from a fit of depression, and all quivering, man as he was, with joy and pride; buxom, friendly Mrs. Blake, with her blue shawl pinned right aslant her stout person, and her rustic hat, drawing forward the young daisy—blushing, laughing, stammering, ready-to-escape Bride—to allow them just ten minutes' chat, to keep up their hearts, the tender young 'craters,' while she peeped into young Boyle's cupboards—to discover what stuff his landlady was made of—and saw that he was not undergoing voluntary starvation, and infused for him with her own hands a decent cup of tea, and prescribed it to be drunk as an accompaniment to bread-and-butter, fresh shrimps, or prawns, or a grilled bone, and several slices of the new seed-cake

which she had brought him in her fitch muff, which she wore morning and evening, summer and winter, when she went a shopping—the whole was not a very ugly sight after all.

Frank Boyle and Bride Fielding seemed at this time on the brink of inconsiderate matrimony. Mrs. Blake openly counselled it, volunteering gifts and loans of napkins and tablecloths, fine dimity and coarse huckaback, till the bride's chest—a beauty of a chest—brimful of Ulster linen, scarce used, was forthcoming. Gracey was constantly bringing messages to Miss Bride astore; some one else called her cushla machree now, and she so young, the darling; and staying to gossip, as girls and confidential maids did then, in Bride's room, told stories of the Brook weddings, how easy they were, and how happy without fail—rest the souls of those who had the faith to enter upon them. Troth, a slip of a pig and a patch of even poreens were enough with love for the likes of her. And Gracey had tried the snail charm all on Miss Bride's account; she had caught a slug—the baste—and imprisoned it between a couple of plates, to follow its trail, and as sure as ever a prayer saw a saint, it glistened and spun out into the letter B, which stood both for Bride and Boyle—whisht! about its also pointing to burial. And had Gracey not dreamed that she saw Miss Bride holding one of the gintry's purses—'the purse that never wants a shilling?' Miss Bride must yield to fate, or she would be 'bet' in spite of herself;

and 'it's them would be the handsomest couple in Dublin.'

It does not seem a very sensible or available plea for Bride, perhaps it rather increases the offence, but it must be confessed that throughout these scenes the young girl does not afford evidence of being otherwise than tolerably heart-whole. She was dazzled very nearly from the first, as many a young girl has been in the circumstances, and all this noise only helped to turn her head the more. Nay, it seems to have diverted the natural current of infectious regard; it prevented the fraction of simple kindliness with which the child soon started, developing into excessive fondness and life-long devotion—substituting in its stead a little frenzy of excitement, wilfulness, vanity, and conscious fatalism.

> 'But if it's ordained I maun tak him,
> Oh! who will I get but Tam Glen?'

The yellow scraps which remain to this day of such romantic love-letters evince all the fire—a plain, concentrated, devouring fire, no mistake there—on the lad's part. Her notes, in reply, if not precisely in the Delia and Chloe style, were in the modified fashion of those model epistles from Miss B—— F—— to Mr. F—— B——, which one meets still in the pages of extinct periodicals.

They were stiff, grandiloquent affairs, as if they had been dictated by Mrs. Anastasia, which, indeed, was sometimes the case; the poetess stooping to be the literary confidante of the story, and borrowing

herself from great Lady Mary. 'Sir,' they would say, vaguely and severely, from their stilts, 'I would have you understand that I disapprove of all violence and coarseness; I have a great esteem for a well-balanced habit of mind, a just taste, and a noble line of conduct.' At another place they would admit, frigidly enough, 'Indeed I think I have a character that could content itself with the relations of domestic life;' but then follows the alarming qualification, 'I must insist on a thorough mutual understanding, and an interchange of perfect confidence.' Occasionally there is a touch of nature dabbed in by the unsophisticated pen of the girl herself: 'I will not let Miss —— make mischief between us.' 'Was it true that you were well up in your examination? My father heard it. I own I was very glad of it.' And a glimpse of rivals, 'You were misinformed about Jenny Davidson's brother; I only curtsied; I never kissed my hand.' 'I am engaged to Lieutenant Reddoch for the first set, sir—what of that?'

Another fact which it is difficult to enter and explain properly upon the public's books, was that this wicked Bride, maintaining a fiction and farce of deceit, was scarcely troubled with the lightest qualm of conscience; and when she was not actively maintaining the warfare, when she was not pouting, or pert, or the plague of good people's lives, she was as happy and as highly prized as ever in her shabby but snug home in Merrion-street. She was as merry as a cricket,

›aking the true Ulster bap, under her mother's direc-
ions; or she was listening in profound admiration to
he Councillor descanting enthusiastically on those
ine, witty gentlemen, whom Bride knew from his
'eport—Pope, Swift, Sterne, and his great name-
ıake, Fielding (with fuming, loving Oliver Goldsmith
Bride made a little acquaintance on her own ac-
:ount), or on Kitty Clive and Spranger Barry, the
stars of his briefless youth; or thrumming cheerfully
›n the old spinnet, 'St. Patrick's-day,' 'Drive the
Geese to the Bog,' 'Tatter Jack Walsh,' and ''Twas
when the Seas were roaring,' which, although they
were so far below Dolly Nugent's or Mrs. Carew's airs,
were still pleasant melodies, given by home fingers to
the gay, gentle Councillor. Nay, even on Sunday,
after Bride had laid aside her finery—her spencer over
her white gown, her long white gloves, her nodding
Paddy-plume, like the soldiers'—Bride would read
aloud the lessons for the day to her mother, or duly
con her private chapter, without the most distant
idea that she was a hypocrite.

It is a puzzle, but ere we set down Bride as a
hardened offender, revive the annals of our grand-
mothers and grand-aunts, and remark how many
stood in the identical position of Bride Fielding, how
many had secret lovers—nay, how many took the
final step without the preliminary banns. After ac-
knowledging these liberties, are we prepared to judge
that the mass cut themselves off from old fathers and
mothers, young brothers and sisters, or do we not

find them, both before and after the great event of their lives, on quite frank, faithful, fond terms? It was the old story ever new, 'five of them were wise, and five foolish;' some were good, some bad, and mere outward customs had very little to do with it. All the virgins of the parable had the cheap lamps, doubtless, of various shapes and patterns; but some wanted the precious inner oil. Let us call the whole business a proud and independent mode of wooing, common among our ancients, perfectly well understood by all parties, sparing awkward statements and settlements, obviating those charges of crafty mothers with willing daughters, which are so sickening, as met with in the chronicles of our dignified English maidens. There were not wanting within the last generation in Scotland those who sincerely held the ease and profit accruing to each side of the house by the simple old Highland lifts of a drove of cattle and a wife. It is possible that there are worse things in life than those giddy, impulsive elopements. The luck and the misfortunes which were to come mysteriously, were equally enough divided between the fugitives and the decorously-suited couples, cast off with all the renown and rejoicing of Balreah; and the most poignant of the regrets on the subject, the most clearly established of the wrongs, belonged to the young companions whom the offenders had cheated out of the gayest of their gay drums and routs. Hush! be gentle and fair, reader, on our venal and riotous progenitors; bethink you of the

loyalty of the savage to his heathen fathers. But this reasoning is neatly shaded off with the first score years of the century. Parents are more reasonable, children more docile, the brusqueness of old manners is gone. The young lady who makes a moonlight flitting, and starts with the fast train, to be signalled for arrest by telegraph at the second or third station, stands a sorry chance of possessing the purity of mind, and innocence of heart, and uprightness of her grand-aunt, and the verdict which descends upon her outrage on society is with justice and in proportion a vast deal heavier than the sentence pronounced on her venerable relative.

CHAPTER VI.

'DRAW, SIR.'

IT was a late harvest among the watery Irish farms. Bride long retained haunting associations with the season, although all the consequences that reached Dublin in general were failures in rich, well-flavoured fish, from the sturdy boatmen deserting for a time the wealth of the sea for that of the land; little children who in May had brought bunches of the fragrant thorn to tempt the confined, dust-wearied inhabitants of the town, hawked now noble rods of purple lussmore—the dangerous fairies' fingers; and the vendors of the brown and ruby dulse in the market offered additional baskets with that variety of fairies' stools which men call mushrooms and brew into tasty catsup, picked up on the old pastures of mossy parks, or on breezy, turfy hill-sides. The trees in the gardens were olive or yellow; the College was up; the sessions were over; the Lord-Lieutenant and his lady were making a country progress, or running across the Channel to

the state and propriety of their ancestral English home; even the tradesmen's families were the next thing to bivouacking in the coast villages, that the weenish children might have the dear advantage of ten or fifteen days of the salt water; only those who were fixtures by custom or interest remained in old Dublin.

The Fieldings did not desert the city, much to Bride's chagrin, though Frank Boyle bore her company; and poor Mrs. Blake had never more than a holiday at the 'Brooke' or the Island; nay, she was more weighted than usual, though the boarding-house was almost empty—the Clonmellicks in the dreary, tawdry grandeur of Clonmellick; Trelawney reposing (for once in his life) on his laurels, the great man of some provincial town after its last circuit; Carew spending his honeymoon, but the fates forefend that he should conclude his engagements as the wags cried; the Nugents sulking or sorrowing out of sight till the wonder should blow over: only Mrs. Anastasia, threatened with rheumatism, and so tied fast to her Dublin doctor and her own bed, in spite of ocean sunsets and moonlight among the wilds, and what Mrs. Anastasia liked too and was not ashamed of the inclination—fresh butter-milk and new-laid eggs. Still Mrs. Blake had no rest, for Gracey had prayed for a week's absence, to help her people to get in the barley and the oats—the blessed corn—before it was growing green again, musha! it was tedded together from end to end of the sheaves last year; and pro-

bably Gracey had in her bright eye the boy who worked with her on the furrows last year, and the harvest home, as much as putting shoulder to shoulder with her kindred in the annual crisis of their lot; and her mistress rated her soundly for her presumption, and complied with her request, though certainly it robbed her of all the nice gossiping tea-drinkings and cosy suppers with which she had intended to illustrate and illumine her rare leisure, unless when she got good little Bride Fielding to come in and help her with her darning and dusting, and sit with Mrs. Anastasia, or when her rough way was made smooth by Mrs. Anastasia majestically slipping into her hand a nameless banknote over and above the payment of her board.

To Bride, groaning over the incubus of being forced to form one of the forlorn hope, doomed to drag out existence in a vacated town, the Blakes' most baked and bare of drawing-rooms, when it was not lit up with gay company, was a very uninteresting refuge one particular afternoon, and Mrs. Anastasia was in her most unsocial mood, not exactly interrupted in a stanza, for she would have stated that fact, and put aside her visitor without ceremony (in that reverential age an idea that might be put in black and white was treated as something), but haunted as by avenging spirits with the last gloomy images she had ruthlessly set to rhyme.

Bride dolefully appealed to the black bag without raising Mrs. Anastasia's spirits; she only crossed

her legs very ungracefully, but somewhat editorially, and reading out sonorously her 'Dirge on Major André,' and her 'Meditation among the Tombs of the Ancient Kings of Connaught,' relapsed into silence.

Through the open window and the cries of the Dublin streets there came to the young girl's fancy the songs of the reapers among the barley, the ditty crooned by the fisherman's wife as she mended his blackened nets at the door of her smoke-brown cabin at the head of the cove, where the splash of the blue waves was her accompaniment, and the shriek of the white sea-gull helped her chorus. Oh! to pull the blackberries by the tangled ripeness of the hedges. Oh! to gather the salt-flavoured sea-pink, and the yellow hornpoppy, in the fresh freedom of the great rocks. In her vexation to pluck these roses of life 'while she may,' little Bride grows peevish and critical.

'Why do you write verses about Major André and the old kings, Mrs. Anty? I wonder you don't love your country as it is to-day. If I were an authoress, I would choose to commemorate real Irishmen.'

'Child, there's a deficiency of Irish heroes, unless you go very far back into the dark ages,' explained Mrs. Anastasia, sententiously.

Bride gave a little toss of her head; she did not like to hear such treason, though she did put less value on Frank Boyle and his homage when there was nobody by to witness and applaud it (oh! for

shame, Bride, when he cared for you alone), and in place of contradicting Mrs. Anastasia's statement, she said, superciliously, 'Yes, it is all very tiresome; there is no gallantry, no excitement, no shock left in the world. I wish I had lived at least when the knights of Tara were skirmishing every night in the theatre, as Mrs. Blake and Mrs. Nugent remember them; that must have been fine; much better than a play, especially when they fell on in good earnest. I wish I had lived like you during the rebellion,' cried the foolish girl.

Mrs. Anastasia did not let the sin pass unpunished; she caught her by the hands all in a passion, squeezing the little members painfully, and glaring fiercely with her black eyes straight into Bride's brown orbs—'You wicked child, how dare you say so? Let me hear you try it again before me!'

'Oh! Mrs. Anty, you hurt me; I beg your pardon, but you've no right to be so wild,' Bride protested, half-frightened, half-offended, and a good deal hurt.

'Wild, indeed! it's wild you'd make any Christian man or woman, with the hardness of your folly and the cruelty of your trifling, though you don't mean it, child, I know, or I'd never speak to you again. Would you like to have seen starving, half-naked men, and they your own countrymen, though they were Croppies and Defenders, and led by Lieutenant Moonbeam or Captain Fireflaught, with the fire of

hell kindled in their faces? Would you have been amused by their lifting a lit faggot again and again to the rafters above your head? Or relish it like a chapter of a novel when Cathie Sullivan, poor Cathie! thought to save her child from the blaze which was to roast us alive, and tried them with him, dropping him out at the low window, and they caught him on their pikes, and held him up, streaming with blood, close to her face, as the Frenchmen did with the head of the Princess?'

'Oh! Mrs. Anty, Mrs. Anty, hold your tongue,' besought Bride, shivering with horror; 'you never told me so much before; I did not know, or I would not have spoken as I did,'—and Bride was scared, and very much ashamed of her idle, untrained longings.

'And you'd think it a grand conclusion'—Mrs. Anastasia spoke her down in unmitigated anger—'when the Green Horse and the yeomen in their blue coats and buckskins at last reached us, and rode down and sabred the unhappy wretches. Yes, we were mighty glad; but none of us could look on, save Cathie; and the keen of their women carrying away the corpses during the dark night went through our hearts.'

Bride was very sorry, and would have done anything to induce Mrs. Anastasia to forget and forgive her offence. It seemed to Bride that her melodramatic mood was cured at once—as if a few words, or anything short of experience ever roots out our

ingrained errors; and Bride's was that inveterate error founded on a pure, bright virtue, that groping after heroism, in whose blind instinct there is still something of the heroic.

In the clear sharpness of the autumn night, Frank Boyle overtook Bride Fielding, and in the immunity of many stragglers, and, for a rarity, alone. The lad looked confident and full of animation, as if he had good news to impart, and yet they came to nothing but a hesitating, 'I wont have the pleasure of seeing you all to-morrow, Miss Fielding, because I've got a particular engagement.'

'I don't know that you'll be missed,' answered Bride, shortly; 'I've always plenty to do, and enough to amuse me, though the town is dull this month.'

Her companion looked at her reproachfully. He was always for having another assurance than that she had given him. 'I would like to tell you what I'm to be about,' he added, after a long pause, 'if you'd be certain not to breathe it.'

Bride was both roused and nettled. 'If you don't like to trust me, sir, you can keep your secret.'

'But I would trust you with anything that was altogether mine, in a minute; now, this is another person's business. Never mind, it does concern me considerably, and I'm sure you'll do nothing to spoil it.'

'No; I should think not, Mr. Frank Boyle,' said Bride, opening her brown eyes.

'You know,' he continued, speaking louder and faster, 'I've never been "out." I can say it has not been my blame. I could not agree with the other fellows in making an occasion. Two years ago, when there was the row at Knockmore, and some meetings afterwards, they had the coolness to tell me I was too young. You see Con depended upon me for the succession. Well, I've at last got a famous opportunity—not a fair word to say against it' (admire the conscience of the wild young fellow—three-fourths of the Dublin men of that day would not have taken that last clause into the least consideration). 'Owen Burke, down at Rathtown, has been shamefully abusing poor John Massey. They are connexions, too, only Owen's the master and the rich man, as well as the scoundrel, and John's the tenant, creditor, and victim. Owen has harassed the old father, and insulted the sister; in short, he has richly earned his wages, and it would be a shame to withhold them any longer. John (I take it very kind of him) has applied to me instead of Con, because I am the more solid fellow, and the bachelor, as he says. It is to be settled to-morrow, down near Rathtown. Owen would not take the trouble to come up, the mean upstart; and if his second be of the same feather, I think we may have a brush also, just to take a little bad blood out of the man before he follows Owen's evil example.'

'Oh!' was all that Bride said. This was an important bit of information, and had come upon her

of a sudden, in spite of her late assertion that good awakening shocks were no more; and when one did arrive, she found that it took a little time to digest it.

Bride had been accustomed to look upon duelling very much as a girl in a hunting country may regard fox-hunting, where a man may break his own neck, or lead his neighbour to fracture his skull—possibly; or as a Highland damsel may view her father's miles of moors, and their days and weeks of grouse-shooting, where guns burst, and go off spontaneously, and stray shots take effect once or twice in a lifetime. The Councillor had fought, every man of any consequence within her knowledge had stood fire from somebody or other, on any and every ground of quarrel. 'Draw, sir,' was shouted in the theatre when a gentleman entered in undress, and on the street when he took precedence of a lady. These matters were of daily occurrence; and whether from the combatants being Irish, from skill or want of skill, from the peculiar restrictions of what were called in Galway the thirty-six commandments, fatal casualties were wonderfully few; and hardy, high-spirited men, in place of shrinking from a flesh wound, or a shattered bone, courted these marks as badges of honour. There were honourable exceptions, but among the mass, duelling, like the love of sport, was a passion; and reckless as it was, brutal as it was, it was not without its amenities and its high-sounding magnanimity in brave, simple men's hands.

It must be confessed that it had hitherto mortified Bride a little to have to tell that Frank Boyle, adept as he was in other bodily exercises, had not 'blazed.' Now, if his fellow in the passage of arms were agreeable to a personal share in the encounter, which was highly probable, he could go out with his life in his hand, and stand dauntlessly face to face with his adversary's cherished family pistols, the individual 'sweet lips,' or 'darling,' whose rust smelt of blood, and return from the trial with the additional glory of proved nerves and zealous friendship. Neither Frank nor Bride saw the practice as a breach of the law, 'Thou shalt not kill'—to them it was rather the ordeal of combat by which men appealed to God and the right, and used the strength which God had given them to assert truth and redress wrong. It would have been as difficult for Bride to say a word against Frank Boyle's *doing his duty*, as for the Spartan matron to forbid her son the field where the Persian arrows darkened the light. Again, Frank Boyle did not ask Bride's advice, though he confided to her his purpose; and if she had volunteered to him contrary counsel, there was certainly room to doubt whether he would have accepted of it, even supposing her influence over him extreme, for this was altogether an extreme case. Then there was the prosaic chance of Frank's proving a mere umpire, after all, to allay any timidity and nervousness that were likely to attack a healthy, light-hearted girl of Bride's antecedents on a moment's notice; lastly, there was the

starchness tempering their association, and opposing any great show of interest in the very life of the man whose overtures she was encouraging, in spite of the disapprobation of her friends, and reminding her that they were near the Fieldings' house, and it was growing late, and there was an imperious necessity for her passing within doors immediately, to avoid the heinous impropriety of remaining one minute longer abroad sauntering with a tabooed squire in the dusk.

Seriously, Bride had no idea of grave danger, either to the seconds or to the principals; she merely experienced a not unpleasant flutter of feeling, and she spoke not a word against the hostilities. Still she did suggest, as she bade him good night, 'You'd better take care of yourself, Mr. Boyle;' and Frank went home to dream warmly of these childish words, in the midst of the stirrings of ambition, the stern suggestions of his moral code, and cold, sudden, vanishing visions of the great dim realities of another world.

Actually Bride awoke next morning without more on her mind than a good deal of curiosity, a renewed pride, and a tenderer interest in her lover—a lively state of temper after the stagnation of the autumn. She did not expect to receive any tidings of the lesson to Owen Burke for four-and-twenty hours, since he had been so uncivil as to require a journey in a ramshackle postchaise down to Rathtown. It was a fine cloudy day for the purpose, not too much

wind, the moon in her second quarter to light them home; and when Bride's heart beat once with a perverse speculation on the style of their return, she smiled again soon, as one will smile away all doubts of the progress of the hearty travellers to whom they wished God speed!—the voyage of the stout ship which they saw set sail—lavishly sending their hearts with and across the foaming waves—accidents are so rare, casualties so few and far between. There was Owen Burke's wife at Rathtown, indeed; how would she look when her husband, bully and tyrant as he was, should be carried into her presence, damaged and disabled by a pistol-shot? Oh! she would soon nurse him well again, and he would be all the better husband for the excellent chance vouchsafed her of lecturing and doctoring him into an improved frame of mind. And as for the others, Bride was like the old Normans in their appeals—she had faith in God and the right.

The night drew on to rain—bad harvest weather, unwholesome for the potato patches, but a comfortable winding-up to the day in a town-house, before a quickly lit fire, blazing and crackling, with a blithe anticipation of winter cheer and winter festivities, almost as good in its way as 'a daffodil sunset' behind the opposite rows of buildings, flooding them with a glow that belonged neither to earth nor sea, and was certainly not the private property of traders and their professional brethren.

Mrs. Fielding was ill, and had betaken herself to

bed, the Councillor had been out at dinner, which also argued supper, and Bride sat basking before the fire, luxurious and dreamy, burning her round girlish cheeks, first tangling her curls and then half papering them, lingering in the hope of her father's reappearance (the Councillor, while immoderately fond of company, was moderately temperate), with the news of the entertainment, which he was wont to issue so well, that even a self-engrossed monkey, such as Bride, was amused by the company, the courses, the sparkling effervescence of the conversation.

Bride was very much at her ease, and rather sleepy. Did the reader ever experience how cold and unnatural a thought of death feels in such a frame and under similar circumstances? Oh! contrast to this warm, familiar, soothing home scene, dank as the grave, strange and sad as the sight and touch of human clay.

There came a rattle of small stones either on the dining-room window or on that of Bride's room in the flat above. The Councillor sometimes made this announcement of his return, and used the same mode of alarm when he missed his pass-key, and was particularly chary of disturbing Mrs. Fielding. Bride was stupified by sleep, and stolid with the rude nerves of youth, health, and prosperity. It was her father, of course it was her father, who or what else could it be? Bride bustled up to show that she had not been quite over-weakly and contemptibly napping, as well as to be the person to

admit the Councillor, because Jemmy Adair, her father's boy, did not sleep beneath the roof, and she had sent old Molly to her sound, sweet repose on the shelf below the great kitchen-dresser a good hour and a half ago. The opening door admitted the wet blast. Bride drew aside, and shrivelled up under the cold. The Councillor had brought home a dark lantern with him—no! who?—what?—why—Alack-a-day! as little girls cried in those days, it was Frank Boyle in a coachman's coat, white as a sheet and stiff as stone.

'What has happened, Mr. Frank? What brings you here, and at this hour? There is no hurt; I see nothing,' stammered Bride, unconnectedly.

In the silence of the night, when their hearts' gallop might have overpowered the clock a little more regularly active than that of Balreah, another step arose in the street, fast, for it was raining, but firm and elastic, as if the Councillor were saying to himself, 'What about the wet, my boy? Good luck to the heavy dew.'

'I have come to bid you farewell, Miss Fielding,' cried Frank, sharply and irregularly; 'I could not go without making the attempt. I had nothing to do with this business. Remember, I told you so;' he grasped her fingers with both his strong hands, as if he clung to them for the moment, and went out again just as the Councillor was crossing the street.

'Hey! stop! confound the fellow! You here,

Bride? Has the watchman been roaring murder? What ails the child?'

'I thought it was you, father,' trembled shrilly out of Bride's ague fit.

'Of course you did, my darling; look sharper the next time. Tut, it is no matter; he has not eaten you; he did not stop half a minute. I saw him go in and come out before me. Whether it was a watchman, or some roving blade, don't matter a daisy. Come, come, goosey, never begin to cry; he was an impudent rogue, I suppose. Well, I wont make you tell, and he'll not whisper it, I'll be bound; there, I'll kiss off the affront, and even the mother wont hear of it; but be more careful in future. Tear and ages, Bride, have you any reason for this distress?'

'He only touched my hand, father, only my hand.'

'I told you so. A matter of moonshine, you proud girl, or is it sheer fear? I would not have thought it of you; you'll make yourself ill, you calf of a colleen;' and laughing, blundering, and wondering, the Councillor drew Bride into the dining-room, furbished up in a trice, with his handiness, some white wine whey, sent it steaming down her throat, and hustled her off to bed, to wake up, 'as composed as a judge, as fresh as a lark, in the morning,' supplementing all his speeches with a 'Whisht, whisht! child, or you'll waken the mother.'

But Bride shivered wide-awake all that night, notwithstanding the scalding white wine whey, mixing up her shapeless terror with Mrs. Anastasia's yester-

day's scold, putting her fingers in her ears, to shut out the fancy that she heard ever and anon the ringing notes of those rebel keens, the pathos of their 'wirrah! wirrah!' the hopelessness of their Gadhow, Gadhow, Gadhow, for ever, for ever, for ever!

The next day Bride did not need to ask for tidings, or to sicken in silence, or to seek to stay out of sight. 'Keep the child by you,' cries the sorrowful Councillor. 'Don't go down to-day, Bride,' pleads the deeply interested mother; 'don't try it, my dear girl.' It was all abroad through Dublin, penetrating like a flash of light its lanes and closes, talked over by the beggars in Weavers'-square and the Coombe, bawled off a broadsheet on the College-green ere nightfall.

John Massey had shot Owen Burke of Rathtown; not slain his man in fair fight, but blown out his brains three minutes too soon, before the seconds had placed them, while they were quietly walking over the field. John Massey told Frank Boyle, after the deed was done, how the notion had haunted him, that if he, a slight, excitable man, were shot down by Owen, were hit fatally by Owen—a cool, burly country gentleman, who had been practising at the bull's-eye for the last month—then his kinsman, master, and enemy would proceed to greater extremities with his (Massey's) unfortunate family, destroy them root and branch, when they had no longer the name of a champion. Still, he could not keep off the duel even with that belief at his heart. The

thought closed in upon him on the appointed morning—the very bitterness of his old father's dread, and his young sister's indignation—and it maddened him. The terrible temptation to do murder and save them, was too much for the nervous, passionate man; and so, calling it judgment, retribution, he raised his pistol, and did the sky send down a thunderbolt, or did he only fire straight before him, at a careless, unsuspecting, unprepared man, his neighbour and his blood relation?

Frank needed no further explanation; the spectacle was stamped deep on his memory; long after southern vines and northern rye-fields, flying battalions and lines of dead had crowded their images there, it remained clear, that first horrible picture, in all its stages. Owen Burke, in his powerful bulk and robust life, strolling insolently enough down from the great house over the fresh stubble, pulling his handkerchief from his pocket to wipe his mouth after breakfast, throwing a word over his shoulder to his train of rollicking friends, humble companions, and admiring servants, to his little son, after the strange fashion, riding on a livery man's shoulder, brought out, too, 'to see papa shoot.'* The few words scoffing at the presence of a surgeon, the crack, the start, the falling man, the stupid stare, the brief cry, 'He has done for me,' the lower call, 'Lift me up, or I'll choke,' the stain spreading on the clothes, the

* *Life and Times of Sir Jonah Barrington.*

little silent stream without, the loud gurgle within for a second, and no more. A paralysed group; no rage, no retaliation, no arrest; for there was none very nearly concerned, save the peeping, curious, ignorant child, come out to witness the event, and struck still like the rest, God forgive them! none else nearer than John Massey; and it was only when there was a break in the circle, and the motionless figure within was seen, that a party of labourers in the adjoining land began to run forward, and clamber over the turf dyke, to reach the spot. That was all; the next thought was flight—flight not for that night, nor next day, nor to herald a week's or a month's absence alone—no, no, it was far worse than that; and there was but the intervention of Frank Boyle's romantic effort to obtain a last glimpse of the creature who had been so dear to him between him and exile. That last was almost an accident. Frank Boyle had not known of the Councillor's absence that night, could not foresee that Bride would open the street door; it was a reckless, chance throw for a word or look, in the teeth of imminent wrath and resistance. Whether Frank, eft to himself, would have gone to the height of folly, and committed a hundredfold dangerous outbreak to attain his little end, was not tried; the details took their form independent of his control, and, moreover, occurred like every one of his actions that disastrous night, in a very brief space of time.

Frank Boyle and his principal might have shot

their thousands and tens of thousands in the ordinary style without any trouble or vexation, unless their consciences happened to be wilfully tender—but not in this one-sided way. Within the last round half-century, Keon from Connaught was executed in Dublin for the same crime, and Reynolds' wife and daughter came up to town, and occupied a window in Green-street to witness the fulfilment of the sentence of the law.

Frank had been getting on with his books; he might have won his love; but it was all over now. The Burkes once aroused and summoned together were a strong family; and honour and the safety of society cast their weight into their scale, though there might be a little outraged humanity on the other. Frank might give himself up as the simple second, stand his trial, and possibly vindicate his innocence; but, at the first blush of the affair, he swerved from this course. He would not turn king's evidence on John Massey, though he loathed his crime; he did not think even to desert him in his forlorn bout (John was no longer fierce, poor wretch); he would not ruin Con paying counsel and securing witnesses; where was the use, when he might not get off? and his career was checked and his aim annihilated. There was nothing for it but escape beyond the seas, like other banished men, and begin life anew—that flat second beginning. The escape was a desperate matter, perhaps, with regard to time, but it was otherwise quite practicable in Ireland, where there

is no criminal so atrocious as an informer. No one doubted that Massey and young Boyle retained the power of decision, or had any great cause to fear the success of flight;—innkeepers would raise relays for them; postboys would gallop their horses to death in their service; boats would put off from any point of the coast, and row as much for love as for money. Their escape was very feasible, but woe's me for any chance or hope of the young man's return!

The public opinion on John Massey's deserts was divided; but there was general charity dispensed for Frank Boyle. True, had Frank defended himself, and got off scot-free, the reproach might have stuck to him; he might have been held in most places in but half esteem afterwards; but as he magnanimously fixed that he would not spare himself, and paid freely the full penalty for an unhappy association, the volatile Irish public were ready to cancel a large portion of his debt, and generously redeem what he left behind him—his character.

The spirited fellow had been modest among his elders, diligent with all his distractions, and had achieved a little solid credit — to be sure, the Boyles were famous for not being balked—had done without sleep, and turned night into day, without continuing the inverse rule of converting day into night. He had been a true friend, according to the rash common opinion, and was suffering in consequence. The wide sympathy would not alter the gross result. Young Boyle's prospects were spoiled, his expatriation

certain; but the victim might have been a little comforted could he have learnt that his name, which in all other countries would have contracted a share of obloquy, was, in his own improvident island, fairly perfumed with the fragrance of a sacrifice.

Councillor Fielding, in place of triumphing, was full of lively regret and contrite kindness. He came up to Bride's room, and he said, with a little flourish, but with the tears glistening in his eyes, 'My little Bride, if I have wronged this poor young Frank Boyle, or in any way provoked him to this or any other unfortunate step, I repent it from the bottom of my heart, and would restore the loss fourfold if I had it in my power. I did not want to see you dependent, child, and I distrusted the wild stock; but perhaps I am punished for my want of faith in a gentleman and a fine young man, as I swear he is. Girl, it is hard to do right; I don't believe that I was ever careful in my life before, except when I married your mother, and folk said she put her prudence in her pocket, but she's never told me she repented it. See what has come of this second trial. I beg your pardon, Bride, I did not mean to hurt you, my dear, rather to save you from hurt, and it seems I have hurt you to death. Didn't I wonder what had sent every drop of blood out of your cheek last night? But we'll not speak of that, or ask a question: and you'll not blame your father and mother; you'll not be too hard upon them for their error committed against their girl—a good child to them, save in this case, always. They'll not

be too hard upon you any more; you've their leave to mourn your love, poor young woman; they'll not bid you farther forget or disown him.'

It might not be dignified and stanch as the gruff immutability and stately surliness of a Saxon father —this poor Celtic gentleman's condescending simplicity, and absence of proud self-confidence and obdurate self-control; but poor Bride shed her first tears on the faithful, secure refuge of a brave, frank breast; and it was a great relief to her—especially since, with all her respect and regard for the silent North-country mother, Bride could not take this liberty with Mrs. Fielding; and, fond as Mrs. Fielding was of Bride—devoted to her, willing to pluck out her right eye or cut off her right hand to serve her or Councillor Fielding; grieving for her daughter; tending her, as never child was more delicately tended; no, not though she should have died for the contrary, could Mrs. Fielding have said plainly, 'Bride, you have lost Frank Boyle; poor daughter! talk about him; tell me his excellences and his injuries as long as you will; I will pay heed to you, credit you, cry with you till your aching heart is eased.' It is an insurmountable stumbling-block for some of us literally to weep with those who weep.

And what was Bride's real condition? Bride so well off, poor soul, though she knew it not, thus cherished in her misfortune by such considerate, self-forgetful friends: they come but once in a life, those who give all and ask nothing, who forgive

slight and defiance and bear with unreasonableness and bitterness.

> 'True love ye may get, many a one,
> But minnie, ne'er another.'

Bride was like a happy dreamer awakened to a cruel truth, a mortal on whom reverse has come with a swift, stinging blow; and as the smooth, tight-bound bark needs the cut of the knife to send the sap a-flowing—as the grain demands the poison of decay to stir up the essence of the plant ere it shoots forth the green blade of corn—as the dyer enlists the acid mordant to bite his colours in vividness and durability into the very fabric of the material—so sorrow made the girl a woman, and converted tender fancies and vanities into true love.

It has been objected that this is a morbid moral—unworthy the might of man. He ought to come as a conqueror, extend his sceptre, or publish his firman, and find his subject woman at his feet. No doubt this conclusion has its gorgeousness; it was the satisfactory, wholesome old custom—eastern Rebeccas acknowledged it, giant Goths enforced it; it may be said to have one modern parallel too—the plan is extant to this day among the New Zealand tribes. But there is an opposite opinion afloat, in spite of great authorities and their experience, which staggers us. If no saucy lass was ever subdued by a lad's trouble—if we have read the poet amiss with regard to the quality which is akin to love—if there was no sweetest, purest, most lasting affection born of the

dangers of the Moor and the Venetian's contempt, and leaping into triumphant maturity under the last outrageous charge—if no gentlest, kindest, bravest, aye, and no most vivacious women have been lured by the very shadow of pain, and wrong, and absolute weakness, have baptized their inclinations in generous tears, and so rendered them henceforth, like Achilles, invulnerable—then Bride must have been an exception, eccentric and improper, upon the pattern of exceptions. She had no more than that last ungenial interview with Frank Boyle; she had no more idea of farther intercourse with him than that woful lady of the desperate fugitive from the Boyne—

'This morn is merry June, I trow,
The rose is budding fair,
But it shall bloom in winter's snow
Ere we two meet again, my love,
Ere we two meet again.

'He turned his horse round, while he spake,
Upon the river shore,
He gave his bridle reins a shake,
With adieu for evermore, my love,
Adieu for evermore.'

But in the stormy light of their separation, there was a violent agitation in the girl's heart. Every scene that had passed between them—dim and indistinct before; every word more than half forgotten, from the June dinner and the toast at Mary Power's wedding, to the visit to his chambers with Mrs. Blake, and the tale he had told her at her own door a few evenings ago, when she might have questioned,

cautioned, contradicted him—and who knows what would have been while the book of fate was still closed?—came back, carved in the sharp shapes and painted in the dark tints of what is suddenly past for ever. All her caprice, coldness, lightness (she forgot that she had listened to him, favoured him, insisted that he should have his due; she was only able to recal young Frank Boyle in the charm of his fresh manhood, in the lavishness and impetuosity of his offerings to her), all surrounded by the pale halo of their final loss. Poor little Irish beauty! we may have laughed at her and found fault with her before —we will deal scrupulously with her now.

CHAPTER VII.

WEARING THE WILLOW WHEN WILLOW WAS A WEAR.

THERE was once a colour—yellow—which was given to those ill-fated wights who were left behind in the world by the ungrateful individuals whom they had elected to the chief place in their esteem; there was also a tree—the willow—in Spenser's time styled the sallow, and by Spenser set apart, in plain language, without ceremony, to the 'lovelorn' and the 'reft.' But there are no forsaken now, no virgin widows, no jilted maids; go through the length and breadth of the land, and seek them in vain; they are a class extinct except in sickly poetry; and in the happiness of this clean bill, we are ridding ourselves as fast as possible of the old, mouldy heaps of cypress stoles, sprigs of rue, and yellow sey mantles and kirtles bequeathed to us by our ancestors, as we have already judiciously disposed of the willow in osiers.

It was not so a hundred, or even fifty years ago, in Ireland; and the Irish women, however their gay

hearts might serve them like carelessly strung bows in prosperity, were, with their zealous affections and powerful fancies, like Scotchwomen, notably faithful in sheer adversity. They received their early crosses and burdens, accepted them, carried them quite openly and resignedly to their life's close. If they were poor they married, and that not unfrequently, for they bore an attraction to chivalrous hearts; but it was with a clear understanding of their early vows, and no falseness to their first faith. Such a one was Sarah Jane Curran, lamented in strains as mournful and melodious as the hopeless defence of young Emmett. But many remained single, happier, doubtless, unconstrained to pine away under the yoke of the double allegiance to which they were bound—the double sympathies to which they were linked—glorified, as it were, by their unusual sorrows, like the virtue of Ruth, known to 'all the city of their people.' And such a one was John Shearer's mistress, dying unwedded at an advanced age, and still delighting to recount to successive generations anecdotes of his wit, his promise, his unsuspecting manliness. In comfortable England, and in austere Scotland, we must deal like the old Jew in the matter of suffering—reckoning it a judgment—condemning and scorning our neighbour, while we lament with him; hence the stout face put upon anguish, the intense shrinking from public pity. But across the Channel, and beyond the mountains, in Hibernia, the Gallic race are constitutionally ardent

and demonstrative, and, with all their vanity, not without meekness. They are not ashamed of admitting their own wounds, and they often treat those of others with the softness and skill of a certain 'good Samaritan.' Every practice has its thorn of a penalty, and the drawback here is that these susceptible brethren are apt to become enamoured of such sentimental distinctions, to covet them, and appropriate them—imposing upon themselves, and to roar under them so lustily, as to impress with greater doggedness and incredulity gruff John Bull. But the abuse of the tendency does not rob it of its original beauty, any more than the feints of the Abraham men—the mock madmen of the sixteenth century—abolished the sacredness with which the greatest of earthly afflictions surrounds the inhabitants of the Maisons de Dieu.

In the Ireland of long ago, those impoverished women inherited another dower, and walked with a peculiar grace. Their acknowledged position seemed to save them from the angularities and eccentricities which are said to incrust single women elsewhere. They came over you with the tranquillity of moonlight, and the coolness of shade. Their temperaments were prone to preserve them contented and happy, and they had the disengaged, unimpassioned goodwill of easy, benevolent old age. You did not meet them perpetually; they were rather withdrawn from the busy world; but so wide was the current of society, that it was every now and then stretching to

all its waifs, and the advantage was, that society was richer, full of more varied elements, solemn as well as brilliant, deep as well as light. You wondered over some sweet, elegant woman, who met with universal respect, yet dressed so soberly, and sat among the old people at supper, played for the dancers, or was permitted to follow her odd taste in her partners, from the rawest boy to the heaviest married man, or the extremely poor relation; and why, if she was not wanted, she retired early, unmolested and smiling, but proof against the fascinations of the night. You asked an acquaintance, and had the ready explanation—'Oh! that is Peggy O'Brien, who should have married one of the MacArthurs. She is the best girl I know, makes the loveliest roses for us to wear at the member's ball, and beats all the country at manufacturing flies for her uncle's fishing.'

Bride Fielding had a soft heart when it was once in play, and she was a resolute little girl—a little girl with plenty of principle in the background. She would go through with a thing once she had taken it in hand; and now she was dedicated to Frank Boyle, she would have hated herself if she had failed him in his sorrow; she would have despised herself if she had denied him any honour to which he was entitled. There was a religious element in the love on which misery had put its seal.

After the first bitter pangs and vain yearnings, Bride's happy spirit came back 'as a young child's,' but it was subdued. The June cherry was transformed

into the rosy apple, hanging as steadily as if already garnered in the goodwife's bin, not swaying with every breeze among the rustling branches, tempting from its transitoriness, as well as from its lusciousness. Bride was a settled woman; matronly, though a young maid, and solitary. She grew industrious, sage, practical, valuable, crowned with a great crown of chastened pleasantness, and very unique in her bright bloom. She would help at the Blakes' dinners still, as she would assist Mrs. Anastasia in an old-fashioned party in the tea-garden at the Grinding Young tavern. She would go with the multitude to look at King William's statue the day after the face had been smartly painted, and the poem 'When Dutch Bill was our Cavalier' suspended round the neck like a falling collar. She watched quite eagerly for the shamrock lady, ere she kissed the knocker at the Castle on St. Patrick's day. She occupied one of the crowded windows which overlooked the bonfire on the 1st of May, at St. John's Well, saw the May Bush flung in with tremendous shou s, and heard how Grace and other girls had stolen out, far on in the night, and stepped across the smouldering embers, to secure each a good husband when her time came. She was still every year at the Brooke, witnessing, from a safe distance, the races, games, courtships, fights, and the dark tints were greatly hidden from Bride, for to the pure all things are pure; and when she would go into one of the 'standings' under the bent boughs,

covered with the gaudy quilts like gipsy tents, whoever should want, she was hugely treated by friend and acquaintance with every variety of meat and drink, spring print, riband, and tin pannikin. It is scarcely necessary to add that she shared in innumerable family rejoicings, and was one of the indispensable persons present in many purely friendly circles.

Bride's parents did not oppose her determined renunciation of the personal interests and the restlessness of youth. Councillor Fielding and his wife had evidently not been over-anxious to dispose of their daughter to begin with; though they were tolerably poor, they were not frightened to keep Bride, they were glad to retain her cheer and her cares for their old age. When they were visited by anxieties—that is, when Mrs. Blake succeeded in infecting the Councillor with heartburnings, there was the prospect of money to be bequeathed to Bride by some rich relation of her mother, to allay all forebodings. Bride's father and mother, certainly the Councillor, had a species of pride in the tender interest that encompassed their former merry girl. A wise man has said, that in her own and the world's estimation the next thing for a girl, after being well married, is to be creditably jilted—he must have laid the scene of his speculations in Ireland. It was a little luxury to the Councillor to say significantly of his darling, 'My poor Bride,' and to know that everybody was feeling with him. It was really next to having her reign like Lady Grandison or Lady

Charlemont; and was not hers indeed another sway —a gentle, beautiful sway? It was a boon to the kind-tempered Councillor to be permitted to entertain a romantic indulgence for all other love-stories, and not to be expected to testify any more prudence or strictness, since he had succeeded so ill at home.

Only one of Bride's particular friends took it upon her to rebel at the verdict, and that was Mrs. Blake; 'his friend also,' as Bride repeated reproachfully. But, in truth, Mrs. Blake experienced a divided duty; she was very sorry for the poor boy, driven from the field, and deprived of his just conquest; she maintained—as gallant and worthy a lover as ever breathed; but he was out of the way and out of the question for the future, and she was for the most part matter-of-fact and a little vulgar—poor Mrs. Blake! She could not bear that her beauty Bride should be an old maid, and that creature Dolly Nugent married an age ago, and proving a very thriftless, cross wife to poor Carew, as everybody told her; it was enough to provoke a body. But Mrs. Blake was reluctantly forced to relinquish her revolutionary scheme when she found that Bride would not put her foot across her threshold if she invited young Graham to meet her.

For the rest, all the world was kind to Bride Fielding; they had always treated her indifferently well, but now they exceeded. Gracey, who had been in love with her from their first acquaintance, and

old Molly, who was grumpy for an Irishwoman, now patched up their quarrels, and agreed to slave for her with the greatest, most lasting enthusiasm—they would have put their very hair beneath the feet of her who had become their pearl of young ladies. Mrs. Anastasia, who, in the beginning, would not commit a single verse, and only wrote the most laconic lines, to see how Bride, the child, was faring, and whether she, Mrs. Anastasia, would be permitted to come and sit beside her—then, having become a spendthrift of her precious time, Mrs. Anastasia would carry her with a high hand to classical lectures, and exhibitions of animals and foreign curiosities, and would even consult her on her almsgiving and her prayers. Lady Clonmellick would send her fruit and flowers. And her friends in country houses would remember to say, 'Now the lilac is out, and the place is in its beauty;' or, 'Now the gooseberries are ripe, and the sugar pears coming on;' or, 'Now there is to be the company at the consecration of the new chapel, we'll have Bride Fielding with us, for a little change to her.' There was no end to the thoughtfulness and the delicate attentions of her people.

And Bride grew resigned at last to God's will, and knew no other unappeasable yearning than that after the Divine Friend and God-man—the Saviour for a world's sins and sorrows.

So swiftly did the curtain descend on the first act of Bride Fielding's drama; and there were many days 'uncounted in their flight' before the smooth,

still waters were ruffled by the next matter-of-fact and worldly, yet not to be despised gale. Mrs. Fielding's North-country aunt did die and bequeath a little fortune to Bride. 'A tidy little fortune,' the Councillor went about terming it, in his great contentment; but in his heart he reckoned it inexhaustible. So he was not distressed and at his wit's end, though he was undoubtedly grieved and scandalized, when he found that some of his own creditors, some holders of bills that he had signed to oblige a friend, some tradesmen whom he could not pay off with the worthless notes of hand which he had himself accepted for just debts, whom before he was barely fit to propitiate and hold off year by year, ever trusting sanguinely to the future, and in cheerful anticipation of some shapeless windfall, now came down on their prisoner on parole, without heeding that they thus broke backwards the commandment—'Thou shalt not seethe a kid in its mother's milk.'

Bride would not miss the sum, the darling; he wished that she could walk in feathers and diamonds, but Bride did not heed these trifles. In his love for her, he felt that he would have done as much for her a thousand times, and Bride fully returned the compliment; and as soon as she was of age compounded with her father's creditors as far as he would suffer it; that is, enough to leave a good nest-egg of debts for future hatching, which hatching took place in due time, and Bride repeated the process in mutual love and honour; no one even sorrowing and fearing for the final result save the North-country mother;

and what could she do? Not sacrifice her dear thoughtless husband to her child. 'The tidy little fortune'—the provision for the only child—the single woman's maintenance—was in a fair way to melt like many greater fortunes into nothingness, when death's dark wings swept over the scene, and swept out all ravelled accounts on this side the grave.

Long enough after her sorrow to make it for the most part gray and dim; nay, when it would have run the risk of being drawn out into fancifulness, or strained into morbidness, for, God help us! our very tears grow 'deceitful,' the country's fever—the consequence of a bad harvest—pushed its vanguard into the towns, and cities, and capital itself. The Councillor sickened, was very manful and hopeful, and constantly calling to Bride to mind the mother who showed no sign of weakness then—grateful to excess, and even mindful and foreseeing—those undeveloped qualities in the Councillor's character, under the cold, impressive gripe of his last enemy.

'I'm going, and I shouldn't mind it; God's been too good to me all my life to make me fear to trust myself to Him, and the Lord Jesus; but I'm cut up for you—left alone; for the mother wont stand it, she'll give in when all is over, and you'll be without us for a while, Bride, my dear. And if I helped to part you from the boy, I hope you'll forgive me again; and I trust God will take it into account, and guard you as an orphan indeed.' And thus the Councillor departed in his prime, mourned by high and low. 'True for her,' as the neighbours said, the widow did

not refuse his summons; North-country and opinionative as she was, she yielded, as he had predicted, to the infection, and was carried after him to the churchyard when the mortal disease had run its course.

Bride, without a blood-relation near her, but with the most faithful and affectionate of friends to share her duties and sorrows, walked as a mourner in the sad train of those who had passed by the often-trodden path before her, (it was the first time they had been selfish in their dealings towards her, going both together when it might be long before she would meet them again, Bride cried, with a bursting heart,) and returned to pass singly through the first trance of sorrow, to re-awaken to ordinary existence, fulfil her father's obligations for the last time, and feel that, save to do God's will, she had nothing more to live for in the empty world.

It was just at this time, when Bride's whole nature was sick and dizzy, that, in answer to the announcement of the loss of her natural protectors, she received an old-fashioned, cordial letter from a kinsman of her mother's, not in Ulster, but away in their original Scotland, which his branch of the house had never quitted, desiring her to try change of air for her health's sake, after her troubles, and enjoining her to pay him and his partner a visit at his own dwelling of Silvercraigs. Bride caught at the suggestion, then scarcely more propitious or less imposing than crossing the Atlantic to quarter one's self on Brother Jonathan, to-day.

The voyage to Scotland was a notable event in Bride's history; and her friends built upon her courage by fitting her out as if for the remainder of her days, and taking a formal and solemn farewell of her ere they committed her to the dangers of the deep, and the cold kindness of the Saxon.

For the last fortnight, her world petted Bride twice as much—nay, a hundred times more than before. Gracey nearly cried her eyes out, as she stitched for her at all odd times, and bound herself by a solemn vow to seek out Bride in the ends of the earth—that is, in a dull country town, or a bleak country house—if her young mistress should be so misled as to settle among the stranger. Mrs. Blake hugged her fondly, and presented her with her garnet ring as a keepsake, in case she (Mrs. Blake) should not—Mrs. Blake could not finish the sentence; and Mrs. Anastasia furnished her with an elegant workbox, as punctiliously divided into oblong squares and little chequers, and filled with threadpapers, yard measures, needlecase and pincushion, buttons and tape, as if the donor had never handled a pen; besides an 'Adieu' to her 'native shores,' which Bride would have doubtless perused with gratitude and veneration, to her edification, in the strongly-flavoured, dark-coloured packet, had she not been so weak as to be flurried by the mere idea of the sea, and dismayed at the rising waves, and distracted in her close proximity to her fellow-passengers, with their solid cargoes of butter, eggs, and bacon.

CHAPTER VIII.

SILVERCRAIGS—THE LAIRD AND THE LADY.

THE spring was late; long-continued frost held the earth in iron bands; the usually busy seedtime saw the haughs and leas of Silvercraigs lying in unbroken furrows; its men threshing corn as at Martinmas, or lounging over long-delayed repairs and improvements with a scorn of their necessity; replacing a sinking, mossy, turf dyke, by a dry stone wall; conveying hurdles to enclose afresh the Fauld hill; or thatching sheds unroofed by winter winds. Forty-five years ago, a 'backward' season left hands dangerously idle, but earlier hours and heartier manners saved men from stagnation.

Silvercraigs was a cheerful mansion; an old irregular country house, confined in accommodation, but brimming over with plain dignity, rough plenty, and comfortable plenishing; and built so close to the borough town of Silverton, situated in a southern Scotch county, that the town clock striking the hour at the Cross could be heard distinctly on the very threshold of Silvercraigs. Yet there was no want

of rural retirement; for although Silvercraigs was, in fact, within the ancient royalty of the dwindled, decayed town, the Silver water which bounded both was so thickly fringed with trees, that houses even within twenty yards of the old house were completely hidden from view. This abundance of trees was the crowning beauty of the place; they displayed no variety—the common ash and the rowan, with its clustering white blossoms, coral berries, and fringed, dark-green leaves, prevailed in each group; but there was charm in their vigorous, spreading life, whether they bent over the stepping-stones, sprang up intermingled with the Dutch-like stacks, or reared their fresh heads over the hoary homestead.

The house which represented the small lairdship was substantial, but narrow as a peel tower. It had little pretence, being contented with its own state, and owned far less space than the farmhouse which succeeded it. It was built off the street or loan, at the end of a garden, with an entrance flanked by tall grey stone pillars—guards to a holly hedge, and encompassed behind by outhouses, and a yard sloping down to the Silver water. Its accommodation consisted of a 'spence,' black-raftered, flitch-hung kitchen, and dining-room or little parlour, with birch chairs, and home-spun carpet; on the second story were the Lady's drawing-room, stiff as slender ribs of mahogany, dead white dimity, globes and fruit-piece could render it, and the sleeping-rooms; while the whole was crowned by the garret, piled up

with webs of unbleached yarn, and fleeces of unspun wool.

No prospect could have been more limited than that from the parlour window looking into the yard; and after harvest few pent-up city houses were more darkened; but that yard—stack-yard and poultry-yard in one — was a busy arena — carts and horses rattled and jingled at all hours over its inequalities, sleek milch cows came lowing in from the pasture, pigs, escaped from rickety sties, trotted into holes and corners, dogs basked in the sunshine, or barked at the paralysed beggar, a fat, soiled pet lamb bleated here, and there, and everywhere, cocks crew on russet hay-stacks, hens cackled in straw sheds, turkeys spread out their feathers, and strutted down the long lanes formed by the stacks, and ducks and geese sailed and dived in the neighbouring pond. Between the stack-yard and the Silver water lay the bleaching-green, with gay bushes of whin and broom, and tufts of brambles with flowers large as wild white roses, and black fruit richer than southern grapes; and standing under the ash-tree by the water, one heard its ceaseless song blend with and lose itself in the worldly hum of Silverton. In the summer evenings, the ploughman and a favoured town lad or two tried their skill and strength at quoits and shinty in the yard or in the loan. At the end of harvest the corn was gathered in, and at Martinmas the blue and the yellow potatoes in their prime were pitted, and the stir was blithest and best sustained; and at

all seasons and hours, with or without her knitting, in the morning with her voluminous thick muslin cap, frilled and clear-starched, in the afternoon with her spotless lace borders pinned beneath her chin, when about to travel, with her shady silk bonnet or warm hood, now with her hand protecting her eyes from the sinking sun glinting upon the burn and through the ash-trees and stacks, now stroking down her white thin muslin apron, the Lady of Silvercraigs might be seen looking out for the return of the Laird from the back-lying fields, or Elspie, by the back way from the town—the footpath by the burn, laden with the profits of her butter, cheese, and yarn.

There was no attempt at outward ornament and embellishment on what was, after all, the principal side of Silvercraigs, beyond Mrs. Leslie's white rose-bush, defended from the attacks of cattle and sheep by a rough paling, and growing luxuriantly, although wreaths of straw were sometimes lifted by a perverse wind, and twisted round its roots, or left dangling from its straggling red-tipped shoots. But the front garden was well provided, not only with kail and cabbage, onion and carrot beds, peas and beans, and ample beds of mint, thyme, and chamomile, but with long borders of fragrant, homely flowers, with corner clumps of lilacs and thorns, and small-leafed briar bushes—more prized than any, with a great plot of gooseberries, a wealth of currants, a few unfailing apple and plum-trees, and one famous pear-tree. An old vagrant, unmethodical, bowery, flowery garden.

It is hard to write of Leslie of Silvercraigs, without mentioning Buchan of the Shaw. Arthur Leslie of Silvercraigs and his tenant in the whitewashed, thatched house beyond the water, and their forbears, had mutually enjoyed the lands of Silvercraigs from time immemorial. Loyal had been the allegiance between yeoman and Laird since Wild Wat Buchan of the Shaw was shot by Claverse's men, not for attending a conventicle, or refusing a test, but wearing a Leslie's laced coat and plumed hat, and in a Leslie's stead, that the representative of the name might the better escape his ruthless countryman, and, like other good Whigs, join William of Orange at the Hague. Since then many a boon had been granted, and service rendered between a Leslie and a Buchan; and in the present generation, when both were yet bold young gallants, Buchan of the Shaw stood his Laird good stead.

Leslie of Silvercraigs had entered on his estate, after a long minority, during which the old lady in her widowhood had been unable to retain the reins of discipline over the wild, wilful young heir, who, breaking through rules and precedents, passed over the Lairds' daughters of the country side, with their Edinburgh finish, their minuets, their spinnets, and their painted satin pieces, and allowed his fancy to fall on the daughter of his poorest feuar—an honest man, who rented his two cows' grass, and no more.

To many a kirn and Hallowe'en merrymaking, and New-Year's first-footing, that, under the guise

of a frolic, he might encounter Annie Laidlaw, had Buchan accompanied the Laird; in many a reel, Buchan of the Shaw had turned the lass, that he might mask the attentions of her subsequent partner; and the frank yeoman liked still to narrate how briskly Annie rebuffed his attempt to snatch the usual kiss at the conclusion of the dance, when her grand suitor stood by; and how he once put her down on her seat, retorting, in Leslie's face, 'E'en's you like, my lass; if you'll not be kissed, you'll not be danced.' The shrewd, independent lady-mother, finding her son's predilection inveterate, and descrying the danger of his becoming an early victim to the dissipation of his class and day, made a virtue of necessity, signified her assent to the mis-alliance, received the low-born bride in person with the customary honours, and by her countenance of the young people, obtained for the husband pardon and power to retain his place as a respectable country gentleman, and for the intruding wife reluctant liberty to amend her education, and a gradual admission into the rank upon which she was grafted.

Whether even the highest female culture of the place and period as an outward growth was acquired with comparative ease, or whether Annie Laidlaw had an innate capability of elevation, certain it is she set at nought the dogmas against unequal marriages by doing credit to the Laird's taste, acting with prudence in her difficult position, becoming, in course of time, a composed and esteemed matron,

ruling at Silvercraigs with wisdom and bounty, like the best lady of Silvercraigs before her.

Still, in her state, when Buchan of the Shaw was invited to share the Laird's family dinner, the Lady would place him at her right hand, and remind him how he had once been carried on the shoulders of his schoolfellows through the town of Silverton, as 'victor's man' in the cock-fight, which the boys of the grammar school celebrated annually, in the presence of their master and other accredited judges, and recall the fine ribands he had brought her and her cousin Janet from the tryst of Blackford.

Indeed, Arthur Buchan was allied to his Laird in more than the Christian name hereditary in both families; he had married the Lady's cousin, originally, as a farmer's daughter, several steps higher than Annie Laidlaw in social position. This relationship the unpretending Laird had no objection to count, neither did the jolly farmer see any obstacle to so proud a reckoning; but the respective wives, more considerate and cautious, thought fit to merge and forget the slight bond of blood in their new obligations; and though Silvercraigs and the Shaw were in immediate proximity, the Lairds' ladies and farmers' wives of forty or fifty years ago were not such gadders abroad as to render a friendly arrangement of the kind impracticable.

Summers and winters waned in rural occupations and amusements to the Laird and his tenant, in precise etiquette and formal business, and still

more formal hospitality to the town of Silverton. Arthur Leslie and Arthur Buchan, chips of the same block, the one rougher hewn than the other, that was all, were middle-aged men, well-to-do and well-considered in their respective stations. The Laird was the great magnate, the crack of whose hunting-whip was law to every writer and tradesman in Silverton; the master of the Shaw was the ruler of the smith and the day-labourers who composed the inhabitants of the hamlet of Nether Quarry. In one respect there had been a broad distinction in the friends' lots in life; the busy, cheery kitchen of the Shaw was full of rosy, riotous youngsters, promoted in time to their mother's side in the parlour, their father's place at the plough, or to the counters and desks of Silverton, while the Laird and the Lady abode in the dull, comfortable stillness, the formal order and unrelieved brightness, of a childless home.

Arthur Leslie was a warm-hearted, open-handed man, impatient of contradiction, violent in his prejudices, hasty in his temper, upright and simple—almost to folly. He was a man of considerable shrewdness and practical ability in agricultural pursuits; but in his intercourse with his fellow-men, with some amount of bluster, he was very much at the mercy of any designing manœuvrer who flattered his bent and imposed upon his credulity; and, a wiser man for his neighbours than for himself, it was only war prices, successful farming, and the will of Providence, that saved the Laird from being 'the

beggar's brother.' The evil custom of those years produced a great degree of conviviality in every circle. Silvercraigs did not exceed his brother lairds, but his standard far outwent the modern limits of moderation; and, when thus excited, the rash ventures he had squandered, the loans he had volunteered, the sureties he had entered into, would have doubled the acres of Silvercraigs over and over again. This prodigality, short-sighted and mischievous, was the man's weakness, but 'the blessing of him who was ready to perish' surely fell on Silvercraigs, for no man was more beloved both by high and low.

Mrs. Leslie, as may be supposed, was a woman of a higher order, full of stanch probity and sound sense, endowed with a good intellect and tenacious affections, and a lofty spirit and temper—the last bent and controlled by religious principles, founded on a rock—all under the veil of a quiet, staid demeanour. A comely, thoughtful maiden, not overcome by the honour which was paid her, before she came to Silvercraigs—a dignified matron, in her very truth and modesty, ever afterwards—noted for her excellent housekeeping, her just dealings with the world, and her freedom from scandalous inference and conclusion. She sang her sweet, quaint old songs when she was first made the Laird's lady; she went alone, or accompanied by Silvercraigs, to every church preaching within her reach; she joined in neighbourly dinners and tea-drinkings; she kept

watch for Silvercraigs' late return from market or friendly visit. She was styled by her compeers 'a discreet woman:' it requires some old-world knowledge to appreciate the sweetness and strength implied in the old-world encomium. Differing from her husband in many of his opinions—mentally and spiritually his superior—unable to refrain from condemning many of his practices, and desiring and praying that he would amend them; nay, ruling him where she could with a firm hand, yet paying him all allegiance of love and honour—Silvercraigs and his wife were a very happy couple, in spite of the temporary and permanent disparity between them; and Mrs. Leslie's superiority was not more shown in the instinct which caused the public to forget, not forgive, her exaltation, than in her whole relations with Silvercraigs.

To this Silvercraigs came Irish Bride Fielding, with the charm of her remaining bloom, the sense and feeling won from her womanly years and womanly trials, and the grace that accompanied them, the sweet and obliging ways which are the birthright of her country people. And Bride was very welcome. A giddy girl may be sometimes too noisy and inconsiderate, but what elderly household is not better and blither for a smiling young woman's goodness and pleasantness? It is hard to say what Silvercraigs would have thought of young Bride in the flush of her lightheartedness—the fresh cherry of Merrion-street, when she slew Frank Boyle with

a single glance of her bright eye: perhaps she would have staggered the somewhat ponderous and slow Scotch household; they were quite well pleased with her as she was, they took to her—old and young, man and woman—most kindly.

The Laird was enslaved at once; like most strong, simple, kindly men, he had a natural tenderness for women; he sighed in his secret soul, not because he had no heir, but because he had missed a young daughter, to joke with, and pet, and be proud of. He swore Bride was the bonniest lass out of her teens that he had ever set eyes upon; Annie was always a comely quean, but his cousin Bride beat her out and out. He was delighted with her frankness and her ready interest in his fields, his stock, and the Silverton gossip. He imagined that no foreign fiddler—though he had been abroad, good man! and yawned out nights with fine musicians—could approach her performance, when, to the accompaniment of his lusty song, or his thundering stamp with his foot and thump with his hand, she opened the disused spinnet, and regaled his rustic ears with such natural melodies as 'The Humours of Glynn' and 'Mall in the Wood,' or such appreciable marvels as 'The Hen's March,' then widely known on both sides of the Channel.

The Laird *gallanted* Bride to kirk and market, at home and abroad, and speedily did her the very best piece of service he could conceive, by providing her with a suitable sheepish admirer, in the shape of

long Patrick Home, younger of Sweethope. Indeed, it would not be the Laird's blame, if Bride returned to poverty-stricken, reckless Ireland.

Mrs. Leslie was more deliberate and chary in her attachments. Besides, in contrast to the Laird—quiet, restrained, determined, but very womanly—Mrs. Leslie had her secret leaning to a bold, blithe, restless, troublesome young man, such as son of hers might have been, had God permitted her to be the mother of young Silvercraigs. But when Mrs. Leslie had sounded and studied Bride, and found that she was not heartless or useless, did not laugh at them behind their backs, or fancy that she was above plain-work and domestic duties, but read her Bible, and, according to her light, followed the same Divine Master—then, though she would have been kind to Bride in any case—for if ever there was a woman loyal to bread and salt, in her grave, decided way, it was Mrs. Leslie—she too adopted her guest as a real friend and kinswoman of the house, notwithstanding she betrayed her partiality, not by loud praise and boundless indulgence, like the Laird, but by sending her about on her business, finding fault with her sometimes, and setting her to rights, consulting her, and occasionally indulging in a little sober, good-natured merriment at the Laird's extreme devotion.

But all the visitors at Silvercraigs liked Bride. The suave little Irishwoman, accustomed to the best society from her childhood, was an agreeable

variety, after the bashful, affected, blunt, or hoyden specimens of womankind that came within their ordinary ken. And Bride was so affable, she had no idea of rendering herself disagreeable to her inferiors in any degree—the Buchans of the Shaw, the old Misses Hislop, in turn sang her praises.

And Bride liked Silvercraigs, poor girl. All their disinterested, clumsy kindness was very soothing to her; and she was pleased to be drifted away and away in this different life, while her heart bore ineffaceable handwriting that she would take out and gaze at, fondly, many a time, in solitude. In social life, the exigencies of her sex and age demanded that she should find other buttresses to which she might attach herself, else the poor human heart would have languished of vain longing, and starved of mere inanition. Bride was just a little troubled about long Patrick Home of Sweethope. Her cousins at Silvercraigs knew something of her story, but they had not been acquainted with poor Frank Boyle, and they would not view her prospects in the light of her Irish friends' imaginations. However, when Bride found how cool and uncertain the young Scotch Laird proved after her Irish lovers, she took heart, gave up all fear of a crisis, and laughed even more than Silvercraigs liked at his squire and his devoirs.

Bride was easily pleased. She admired the little town, precise in its jollity. Her taste was satisfied with the secluded but fertile landscape. She was happy to try Elspie's wheel, and contented

to join in Mrs. Leslie's spinning and knitting. She enjoyed wandering out into the yard, and, under pretence of feeding the pet lamb, or the chickens and young turkeys, idle away the whole afternoon, diversifying matters by seeking nests among the pale, profuse straw, fondling Heather and Gather, the colley and greyhound, and calling for Katie Drysdale, the mother of the outworkers and servant lasses, the stocking-knitter-general, and extra spinner and milker, who had been born on the land, had kept Silvercraigs himself when a baby—and maid, wife, and widow, had dwelt in the 'Cotton' beyond the threescore years and ten of man's existence. In addition, Bride was charmed to set out, mounted behind the Laird on his Galloway nag, her round arm clasping his extensive waist, wearing her white muslin gown and round hat, to mingle among the young people in the neighbouring country houses.

It was a hazy afternoon in March, when a strong rime hung white over Silvercraigs and the adjoining country, and the Laird was striding in the rear of a pair of ploughs, turning up the red clayey soil in a field next the loan. Simon Braid was loudly gee-upping his horses, crows were fluttering overhead, and the swollen Silver water raised its murmur to a hoarse plaint. Within doors the kitchen resounded with the busy spinning-wheels, big and small, and the gossip of the tall strong servant lasses. The parlour was quiet; and although so early in the year the low roof and narrow bounds rendered the open

window facing the cheerful yard, and the blue sky with its fleecy clouds, acceptable.

Mrs. Leslie moved about preparing tea. She was a large woman, with a fair, well-preserved complexion, a steady, but light step, and the perfect simplicity of her dark silk gown, her clear-starched neckerchief and lace cap, without a shred of riband, suited the repose and character of her regular, marked features. Bride was over-seaming a quantity of clear, fine, unbleached towelling, and was sewing with great industry. Bride wore a silken-like, soft woollen gown (was bombasin the stuff?), of a still graver tint than that of her hostess, but whose mournful sombreness only set off the freshness of what even in its refinement was a barn-door hued beauty, and vindicated the undiminished lightness and litheness of the figure. The sleeves, terminating in a full frill at the elbow, displayed the dimpled arms. The neck was half hidden by the pure, plaited ruff, an old appendage again in fashion, and the chestnut hair still in a crop, as in Wilkie's pictures, relieved the thinner but more delicate outline of the face, and the well-shapen head.

Mrs. Leslie had unlocked her cherished cherry-wood tea-caddy, transferred the proper quantity of tea to the square silver teapot, put it down to undergo the ticklish process of 'drawing' in the cosiness of the newly-swept hearth; she had arranged with her own hands her little cups without handles, her rolls of fresh butter, her basket of girdle-cakes and soft

bannocks, as well as her white bread—the whole under the shadow of the mighty sweet-milk kebbock; and then going to the door, and pausing on the threshold, she called, 'Hey, Laird! come in to your tea.' The challenge was sufficiently loud to pass through the misty air and reach its destination, and yet the Lady's voice was naturally soft—soft as Bride Fielding's, though both wanted the spring-tide echo of song and laughter.

Silvercraigs shouted back that he would be 'in belyve,' and after a few orders to his men, walked through the yard, stooped his head to enter his ever-open door, took off his hat, and proceeded to occupy the elbow-chair placed for him opposite the window, with Heather and Gather at his feet.

Mrs. Leslie simply broke a bit of cake to eat to her much-prized tea; Bride, too, trifled with her dainty cup; but Silvercraigs made up for any deficiency or delay by clearing his way with commendable celerity and application. In the intervals between the huge fragments of bread and cheese which occupied the Laird's white teeth, he led the conversation, telling the Lady that he had found Tiblie's calf '*but*' the tether, dancing among the stots' feet; that he had met Redmyres, who had assured him that there was no fall in the Edinburgh market; that the Minister had heard last night from his son Hugh, and his ship had boarded a French frigate, and gained no end of fame and prize money. The Minister was a proud man, and wished that the four useless maidens

sitting with their hands over each other at his fireside, were more brisk lads, like his son Hugh, first lieutenant in the *Danger*, and posted into the *Indefatigable*, or like Willie, carrying his country's colours over the bloody fields of Spain, to win additional honour to their roof-tree.

Silvercraigs' next scrap of tidings was scarcely so judicious. 'Young Sweethope had not yet returned from Cambus;' and Bride shook her curl-crowned head comically, and even Mrs. Leslie was moved to observe, in doubtful charity, 'Hold your tongue, Silvercraigs, it is maybe not true.' Silvercraigs only laughed his loud, free laugh; it was not a great flaw in his eye that long Pate Home was wild according to his years; it was the Lady who was always particular; but Bride would know better.

The conclusion of the meal was accelerated; for before the shining, solid eight-day clock at their elbow struck six, and the faint chime of the Silverton bells spoke of offices deserted, crowded news-rooms, and more formal tea-tables, Bride exclaimed that there was Mr. Buchan of the Shaw entering the yard; and sure enough there was the farmer, in his douce blue coat and grey small-clothes, strolling in for a chat; and Silvercraigs, in his more aristocratic green shooting-coat and buckskins, hastened out to join his crony, and Mrs. Leslie went also to press the farmer to come in and allow himself to be refreshed from her cupboard bottle of cherry brandy, while she inquired kindly for the gudewife and the

sons and daughters, and if all was thriving 'down about the town'—not meaning the burgh of Silverton, but the sheds, and stalls, and '*bauks*' of the Shaw. Arthur Buchan had been into the town attending some of the many public meetings, and had turned aside to have a word with Silvercraigs on the state of the crops, and affairs in general, while he was yet in haste to reach home and get rid of his coat and hat.

Silvercraigs accompanied his double across the water, and along the field path, past the clumps of trees and ends of hedgerows still leafless: in a very few minutes they would be at the door of the Shaw, and the visitor had vouchsafed no weightier observation than the remark—pointing with his stick to the freshly sprung corn—'That's a fine braird, Silvercraigs;' to which Silvercraigs responded as succinctly, 'Not bad, Arthur.'

All traces of household bustle vanished swiftly. Mrs. Leslie tarried in the kitchen, inspecting the hanks of yarn on the kitchen wheels, or, in the dairy, watching the turning of her cheeses. Bride lingered at the window, waiting for the unyoking and watering of the farmhorses, and in the mean time plucking the dead leaves from the geranium.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FRENCH PRISONERS.

SO quietly the world went at Silvercraigs, while in the high places of Europe great struggles were pending, mighty deeds achieving, whose echoes will ring for ever in the pages of history. Silvercraigs sat now and then for a whole afternoon in his parlour, reading aloud the county paper to his attentive family, exulting over the defeat of the French and the glory of the national arms. He joined a corps of yeomanry, of which a county nobleman was captain; and there were more musters, drills, and dinners in the country's protection than the Lady of Silvercraigs approved. There was a land speculation, in which various Silverton notables eventually burnt their fingers, and each quarter of wheat appeared to secure a yet higher amount of current coin, while the grumbling thunder of rioters sounded fitfully but ominously in the manufacturing districts. A regular regiment was stationed in Silverton, as in worse disposed localities. At frequent intervals the Silverton bells pealed, shouting urchins

surrounded the bonfire at the Cross, and the town council assembled to drink full bumpers to the victory of the day and its hero. Otherwise, the convulsions of nations did not particularly affect the inland burgh town, which did not fail to pride itself on its public spirit and fidelity to king and constitution.

In the mean time the old island prejudice was running high throughout the whole country, breaking out in the grim rancour and passionate triumph with which the slightest rumour of advance or retreat on the part of the foe on the distant foreign battle-ground was hailed along each old-world, remote country-side. On common British grounds the Scot had forgotten that more than one of his hapless old sovereigns had practised all knightly feats and courtly graces on the banks of the Seine; that the lordly line of Hamilton included Chatelherault in its ducal titles; and that many a French lance had been broken for St. Andrew and the Thistle when a forest of hostile yews encompassed the English Rose. To vindicate not their mutual rights alone, but the liberty of Europe, to quell a prouder and more unscrupulous invader than Edward Longshanks or Caernarvon, the gallant Scots Greys were to win the reluctant admiration of the arch-enemy himself, and the dark tartan of the Forty-second to mingle with the invisible green of riflemen, and the brilliant scarlet of lifeguards and dragoons.

This national union of opinion and burst of widely-

extended feeling sometimes showed itself ludicrously enough, but in all circumstances was suggestive of the blended good and evil—the honest, deep-seated love of country, and the ignorant animosity, of which it was composed.

Silvercraigs, as a bold Briton, fully shared this martial spirit; on the other hand, Silvercraigs, as a private gentleman, was more liberal. The Laird had received in spite of himself an education several degrees higher than his neighbours, and when yet a youth he had spent a few months abroad. Even when the intellect is rude, travelling will enlarge a man's views, provided his heart is sound, and the Laird of Silvercraigs' heart was big as well as warm. He never quite forgot that he had witnessed pleasant homesteads, where the mulberry and the vine took the place of the birkwood and the bear, and had partaken with hearty relish and courteous welcome the '*bouillies*,' and '*brioches*,' and '*soupe aux citrouilles*' of the dexterous, gesticulating, merry wearers of blouses and *sabots*. He resented every slight to his country, and gloried in its brave defenders; but he was not without a generous recollection of brief and long-past intercourse with their opponents.

Thus, when the Government in its disposal of the ill-fated captives to British guns and bayonets, thought fit to astound Silverton with a draught from the burden, Silvercraigs amazed the world and his nearest friends by coming forward first man to request a foreign billet in his peaceful, well-filled

house. It was a clear case of *noblesse oblige*. Silvercraigs by no means relished the deed, or the scandal it would create, but he walked up to it gruffly and unflinchingly. The Laird was called upon to be loyal and to offer an example of magnanimity, and he must do his duty. It was a considerable sacrifice; the Lady would be dismayed, the neighbours up in arms; and the Laird's charity did not blind him to the fact, that his own comfort would be spoilt under the affliction of a frog-eating, shoulder-shrugging, fire-breathing Frenchman, his natural foe, basking in the blink of his hearth, and delving a spoon in his porridge; nevertheless, if he did not give the cue of decent respect and forbearance to the lodging-house keepers and vintners of Silverton, there would be meanness, abuse, and possibly outrage, which would disgrace the town for ever.

The strange prospect excited the utmost sensation in parlour, kitchen, and cotton—that Silvercraigs was 'fey' was the mildest suggestion. Elspie and her fellow-servant, seated on their wooden stools, entered shrill appeals on the tablets of the stout ploughmen, eating their supper of potatoes and herrings, to guard them from the risks run by the venture; and old Katie Drysdale coughed her querulous scold, 'Silvercraigs might have bidden till he had seen her in the mools ere he brought a loon to the town, who would be lifting whatever came to his hand, and might have Buonaparte himself at his back; and happen what might, her Sandy would

be in the thick of the play, and get his death, leaving her a widow woman of fourscore and five, without a drop's blood to her in the world.'

'Silvercraigs, what do you tell me? You that are a yeoman, and with the lave hate the French worse than sin, that I should say so. A prisoner lad who will not ken a word we speak, or eat a morsel, save of fricassees and hashes, that no honest woman could be expected to dress; and he'll be a Catholic, with his bowings, and mutterings, and strings of beads, and pictures of the saints and the Virgin Mary, bringing down the Lord's anger upon the house that witnesses his idolatry. Oh! Silvercraigs, man, speak to the Minister.'

Now, Silvercraigs was not disobedient to his Mother Church. His minister, like many divines of a period when the old persecuted Kirk of Scotland had become somewhat dull and drowsy, was a portly, rosy gentleman, conscious of his dignity, and inclined to keep a watchful eye on his dues, but upright and kind, and attentive especially to the decayed members of the better classes, and not without the root of the matter in him, as well as later generations can judge. Overlooking more ceremonious dinners, at least thrice a year the Minister and his partner—connected with more than one county family, and as big and formally benevolent as himself—came out to drink tea at Silvercraigs. A substantial and luxurious tea they praised and consumed. The distance was a step, but the Minister's high,

narrow gig drove the reverend couple to and fro, and rolled off on its return, encumbered with baskets of newly laid eggs, and freshly churned butter, a pair of fat young fowls, or even a few great cuts of the Lady's home-spun worsted, to be knitted into warm winter hose for the Minister. Silvercraigs felt gratified by these friendly, familiar visits, and, being duly warned, never failed to appear in his well-brushed green coat, and clean, light-checked neckerchief, performing the functions of a courteous and hospitable host, ending by convoying the clerical conveyance, whose pace did not exceed his quick, firm walk, down the loan, through the town, and taking leave, after gallantly handing out Mrs. Fowler at the manse door.

Silvercraigs was a church-going man, and a respectful listener to the high and solemn truths proclaimed from the pulpit, but still the sternest, loftiest Mass John—it is to be doubted John Knox himself—was in the Laird's estimation a less authority on temporal matters in Silverton than himself. Therefore Mrs. Leslie's reference rather goaded on than shook her husband in his determination. 'No, Annie, no; it is no affair of the minister's; it is my will, and it shall be done. Please yourself again as you best may, but mind you, when I think it fit, my word is law at Silvercraigs.'

Mrs. Leslie, in common with all good generals and able statesmen, comprehended when resistance was vain, and submitted to the idea of the intruder; and the calculation which preceded his accommodation

even in a small laird's mansion of that day, presenting a composed front to the open remarks and side hints of acquaintances, to whom Silvercraigs was for the occasion grim and uncommunicative. None should say that the Laird's house was divided against itself—that he had found a malcontent in his humbly-born wife.

To Bride Fielding the stranger was no curiosity as a Frenchman. Emigrants and the wrecks of the political agents of the rebellion were moderately plentiful in Dublin. The gifted Lefanu family, allied to the Sheridans, were not the only household who had risen to social eminence in the hospitable city; but she had no acquaintance with Frenchmen as prisoners; indeed, she had lived too late or too early in a century to find her experience of that unlucky class much beyond that of Silvercraigs Elspie, who had only seen the inmates of the jail at the Cross letting down strings from their grated windows for letters from friends and pence from benevolent passengers, and had never exchanged words with such outcasts, unless with Nell Menteith, who stole the linen from Silvercraigs green. And this poor fellow, to their ignorance, was exciting, like the application to a fortune-teller, or the possession of a lottery-ticket. Was he young? was he old? Was he captured among flying shot or flashing steel, or taken after he had straggled away from his comrades, lying hidden in some chill, obscure lurking-place, sleeping in forgetfulness, or dreaming of home?

Would he sit with them of an evening, for the precise, economical Scotch household would be scandalized by the idea of a separate fire and light? Would he ever be able to communicate with the family, whose slow, strong dialect even Bride, a fellow Briton, had found it very difficult to translate? How would Silvercraigs endure the continual intrusion he had provoked?

Bride was interested with a roused mental appetite, which was enlivening, but not keen enough for pain.

Silvercraigs continued taciturn on the subject; he had volunteered, and he would prove as good as his word; he would afford bed, board, and civility to one prisoner, but he would not discuss the grievance. Mrs. Leslie might make her arrangements as she could, but the secret of the contrivances and alterations, the hurry and excitement fermenting in the house, was forbidden ground of conversation. A candid, single-hearted, talkative man in general, the Laird's reserve demonstrated the national repugnance he had overcome, and the effort he had accomplished to discharge an old debt, and keep the town out of mischief. Mrs. Leslie chimed in with the Laird's humour; but it was hard upon an Irish girl like Bride, and this the first event in the family since she had entered it.

Bride tried with all her might to undermine the compact of apparent indifference and oblivion signed by the others. She employed every little stratagem

to tempt them into an expression of sympathy; and when she gave up her host and hostess in despair, she endeavoured to atone for her discomfiture by privately collecting every scrap of information through little confidences with the Buchans of the Shaw, the Silverton ladies and gentlemen, Elspie, and Katie Drysdale, and by managing to fling her knowledge and the expected novelty in Patrick Home's teeth every night he presumed to walk over from Sweethope in order to cast sheep's-eyes on one whom he might have had the wit to see had been bespoken long, long ago. The primitive tea-drinkings, dances, and suppers of the first era of Bride's residence at Silvercraigs became quite commonplace, now that the whole borough was astir with its consignment of savages, the difficulty of locating them, and the moral and mercantile consequences of the importation, to which the tradesmen reconciled themselves to the degree of opening their houses upon government security, but which sank the single ladies in the depth of tribulation. And Silvercraigs was to have a whole man to itself, and Bride was told not to take up her head about the matter! On the contrary, Bride reflected on the nearness of the hazard, and magnified its shifting shadows by the broad, partly credited horrors of Elspie's stories, holding her breath with a thrill of awe, in which there was the old charm, without Mrs. Anastasia to rebuke her for taking any portion of pleasure out of other people's misery.

The memorable day of the French prisoners' en-

trance into Silverton dawned at last. Silvercraigs went into the town on duty, but for the first time since her appearance among them, he churlishly neglected to ask Bride Fielding to share in the gaiety. It was Mrs. Leslie, no sightseer herself, who provided for Bride's part in the spectacle, by sending her into the principal street in Silverton, with a message to the Misses Hislop, whose place of business commanded the Cross and the Town-hall. Why, even Elspie, in spite of her mortal terror, defied censure by failing to dispose of the contents of her farm basket until late in the day, that she might avail herself of the opportunity of getting 'a gude glower at the villains.'

The Misses Hislop were the first mantua-makers in Silverton, and it was now a busy season with the spring muslins, and a new shape of habits, so that Bride had an excellent apology for a call, even although Mrs. Leslie had not been both a customer and an acquaintance of the owners of the best windows for bonfires, auctions, and public punishments in the town. In consideration of the Laird's humour, Bride did not venture upon altering the dress which she wore in her usual walks, though fancying the importance of the ceremony, and the crowd that might be abroad in the generally empty streets, she had the womanly weakness to think ruefully of her tucked petticoat, open skirt, and turned-up beaver; while fain to content herself with her bombasin, white silk shawl, crossed in front, and fastened in a knot

behind, and gipsy bonnet tied down with a black silk handkerchief.

Notwithstanding the slight drawback to her vanity, Bride set out on a sunny April morning, with spirits somewhat in harmony with the mottled sky, flushing gowans, and the field-work commencing briskly all around her.

The path down the loan into Silverton was very short; but a child at school might have lingered an hour within its few yards, and found enough amusement in reaching up to catch wreaths of hawthorn to fill the parlour grate, in pulling 'cocks and hens,' with which to entice another Sandy Drysdale into mimic combats, to the neglect of his wandering charge, so that Hawkie stole over to the cutting grass, and swelled like a mountain on an unlimited banquet of clover, or stalked up to the bleaching-green and chewed the 'cloth;' in peeping into whin-sparrows' nests, always looking back to the receding town, where the last group of children at their games, with the murmur of their voices, were unfailing lures, except when unlearnt lessons, and the master's wrath, frowned them into obscurity brief as gloomy.

Bride Fielding, grown a grave woman, had not so many motives for delay, had not so many treasures to store into her pocket; for, under the bombasin, Bride had adopted a silk pocket curiously patched in brilliant lozenges, that seemed in imitation of the illumination of ancient missals, or the stained glass in the windows of gothic cathedrals. Yet Bride

paused once to pluck a cluster of downy buds from one of the three bending saughs, a landmark in the centre of the loan, that she might draw them softly through her fingers. Bride knew no touch so caressing, unless it were the silken leaves of an insignificant plant growing in a corner of the garden at Silvercraigs. Again she stood still for a second to glance around at the sound of a horse's foot striking upon her ear a little before she reached the point where another farm road, along with Silvercraigs loan, joined the town of Silverton. A scarcely perceptible increase of poppy red on the cheek, and a saucy twitch of the mouth into a fleeting smile, betrayed her recognition of the approaching rider.

The next moment Bride looked very sedate, and advanced with great decorum, picking her way fastidiously over the cart-ruts in her rough path. The detached houses were at hand—cottages, with or without kail-yards; more aspiring two-story buildings, walled in with boughs of fruit-trees peeping over the barrier, and immediately beyond, but concealed from view by a sharp angle, a sudden transition into the market-place of Silverton. In the morning the suburb looked deserted; the men were gone to their work, the children to school, the gudewives were within, engrossed with their cleaning and cooking; only at the sloppy door of Luckie Cleghorn's public-house a train of carts stood unattended, and jovial voices and boisterous laughter broke upon the stillness.

The other wayfarer was one with whom Miss Bride Fielding was sufficiently familiar—one with whom she was destined, by those now claiming the guidance of their respective fates, to climb the hill of life in closest propinquity—Patrick Home of Sweethope, the only child and heir of Silvercraigs' oldest neighbour and brother laird. Young Sweethope was bound for Silverton market; the hour was confessedly early, but then he had business at the bank, in the shops, and at the mills. Taking it into account that the master and mistress of Sweethope were an old-world Jack and Joan, a cosy, slumbrous couple, it was worthy of notice how many commissions their son found to execute on their behalf every fine day, about the hours when the Lady of Silvercraigs and her guest might reasonably be looked for in the loan—although he might appear at Silvercraigs, not half a mile from Sweethope, any night in the week, and welcome.

Patrick Home did not leap off his horse, as he had intended, because Bride—the bright, bonny, grand Irishwoman, to him—after that transitory, uncaught act of inspection, kept her eyes fixed on the ground until they were nearly face to face, when, lifting them suddenly, she wished him a very measured and rather distant 'Good day!' Patrick Home blushed up to the eyes, and was completely foiled. Patrick Home was a young fellow of Frank Boyle's age when Bride first knew him, and so, about three or four years younger than Bride now—one of the

trifling obstacles over which the young Laird was doomed to groan. In bodily stature he was a young Hercules, promising to become even a larger, stronger man than Silvercraigs or Buchan of the Shaw. His breadth of chest and length of limb were still ungainly, but they were imposing; and his sun-burnt face had much heavy comeliness, and good humour, and solid sense, traits that exist without either firmness or force of intellect. He had numerous merits; he was manly, honest, and affectionate; a kind son, friend, and master. At the same time, he was wild now and then, more from a low standard of virtue, unlimited indulgence, a dearth of mental occupation, and an incapacity for saying 'no,' than from depraved inclinations.

It is necessary to repeat that among the worthies in Patrick Home's memory, were Captain Erskine, who went to London once a year for the express purpose of gambling away the better half of his pay while his family starved at Silverton; Mr. Maitland, whose orgies of choice spirits saw out two sunsets—closed shutters, wine and brandy, devilled bones, fat brose, cards and dice, obliterating the intervening day with its catalogue of dull cares; and Provost Wallace, the rollicking magistrate, whose creed was a good word for every one, and wholesale waste of the town's funds, which left it little better than a pauper upon the hands of its children's children. These good fellows had their amiable traits; and the censors of Silverton, Dr. Fowler and Mr. Hunter,

looked wistfully on at their doings, and sat, with a hopeless protest, at the performers' tables. It was a favourable certificate to young Sweethope at this time, that, after every fit of *his* dissipation, he underwent a stage of shame and repentance.

Patrick Home was constitutionally shy, and his shyness reached its maximum when he encountered Bride Fielding—so clever, so easy, so pleasant to eye, ear, and mind, that she seemed a being from another world. An unwonted instance of filial docility, he had been smitten with Miss Fielding in this, his raw, uncouth youth, almost as soon as Silvercraigs and Sweethope had laid their heads together, and agreed that it would be a desirable thing if Pate would 'make up' to Miss Fielding. She would be a good, cheery wife to him; she possessed a suitable tocher; and it would be the greatest pity if one who had come a stranger among them, and won golden opinions on every side, should be totally lost to Silverton. She had 'met with a cross' in her youth, to be sure, or she would not be like Pate, 'a wanter,' to this day; but so sensible and happy a lass would not refuse to be consoled in time, and to render another, and perhaps a worthier man, as happy as she was herself in her unselfishness and sweetness. Young Sweethope's attachment was generally understood in the neighbourhood, principally through Silvercraigs' cool hints, but Bride had given the wooer so little private encouragement, that the young Laird's hopes were rarely much above zero,

and he was reduced to a state little better than that of the despairing lover who spoke of 'louping ower a linn,' and tempted to revenge himself on Bride by snatching at the poor comfort within his grasp—that of rushing headlong to destruction at trysts, and sales, and hunting-fields. Still, Patrick Home had some faint thoughts of ultimately attaining his aim with which to buoy himself up. Was he not the only bairn at Sweethope? and was not Sweethope larger, by a hundred acres, than Silvercraigs (even if Bride had been a daughter of the house), and secured to him and his by a strict entail? was he not the prospective holder of certain bonds and entries in the Silverton bank-books, to a tune that would make it good fortune for any girl of his own degree to start at the crack of the pistol-shots which should hail her a bride on the low, wide threshold of Sweethope? Patrick Home looked mainly to Sweethope, and put small dependence on his personal and individual merits in the scale of his chances for Bride Fielding.

Their mutual friends reckoned confidently on the feasible alliance, and held Bride Fielding—for as estimable a person as she was—guilty of a little coyness and pride in her protest. Silvercraigs was cordial in his assent; Mrs. Leslie entered no objection; and so certain were Patrick Home's father and mother of their daughter-in-law, that the new house long projected at Sweethope, was now confidently spoken of as an independent establishment for Pate and Miss Fielding—his young Irish lady.

Bride had done her best—no light task, where no positive declaration was yet attempted—to shake this assurance. She had at first grieved over it oppressively; but when she found that she could do nothing either to arrest or to conclude the affair, she suffered herself to treat it lightly—as a jest of Silvercraigs, as a family project that would die out for want of substantial food—as a flirtation of young Sweethope's, as if Patrick Home was of the stuff which composes flirts—oblivious to the danger closing round herself in such toleration.

But in spite of all this support and sufferance, young Sweethope had but a dim, doubtful vision of the conclusion of his suit. For a fellow of strong, rather than quick feelings, and sound but blunted powers of reflection, he had both fancy and penetration within his narrow orbit. He knew (far better than Bride herself, who had never pondered her feelings towards him, deeming them of no consequence), with a sad sincerity of conviction, that he had no further hold upon Bride Fielding's affections than that supplied by her friends' intimacy with his people and her little womanly vanity; and for his life he did not see how he was to deepen it when she held him back by her merry airs, or treated him with heedless carelessness. 'I know,' Patrick Home said to himself, with a rebellious sigh,—'I know very well that Miss Fielding only lets me run after her to please Silvercraigs, and maybe to permit the Scotch lasses to see that she can twist me round her finger. I'm

a big fool to bear it, but I would stand more for her pleasure; I would make myself the laughing-stock of Silverton—or die for her sake.'

Young Sweethope, in the splendour of his stiff jockey coat, his heavy whip trembling in his nervous grasp, eyed Bride with furtive looks. Very like a princess or a nymph she was to him, advancing to ring the Misses Hislops' bell, to sit an hour in their mannerly workroom for the purpose of viewing the spectacle of the prisoners; looking at it with her clear, quick eyes, and giving her wise, witty remarks for the benefit of the applauding company; returning to Silvercraigs in time for the long, cheerful evening, illuminating her cousin's house, and the whole farm town, during the hours of twilight and darkness. He answered her light salutation in a trembling, scarcely conscious fashion, and proceeded to walk his horse by her side into the town—a liberty which Bride was not inclined to countenance.

'I'm sorry,' said Bride, decidedly, stopping short, and crossing her little hands on her white shawl; 'but Mrs. Leslie is very particular, and so are her friends the Misses Hislop; they'll be looking out, and they'll expect me to walk by myself—I mean not attended by a man and horse.' Young Sweethope protested hurriedly and angrily against this rule, roughly denouncing the Misses Hislop as starched and evil-thinking old maids, who could not find it in their hearts to allow the youth with which they had to deal, the freedom and enjoyment they had never known or long forgotten; but finding that Miss

Fielding did not move a step, nay, declared rather proudly that the Misses Hislop were most worthy ladies, and she believed her cousin had placed her under their care to-day, he submitted, as he constantly did, and trotted out of sight in blended depression and dudgeon. Of what use his early breakfast, his careful toilette, the bunch of primroses in his button-hole, to this inexorable superior?

Bride spread out her shawl and tucked up her dress anew, and walked on, not very grateful for her victory, rather scornful at the ease with which she had got rid of her self-elected escort. Not that Bride really wished Patrick Home to ride with her to the Misses Hislops' door, rendering themselves, as she credulously supposed, the talk of the town; neither was it convenient for her to linger beyond the appointed hour; but then, tried woman as Bride was, it is to be feared that she did want to witness how far young Sweethope was disappointed and annoyed at his dismissal, though she sighed and scolded herself well the next moment.

Bride was turning into the market-place, and remembering vividly the occurrence which was to mark the day, and that it was very fortunate that the Misses Hislops' house, in a central position to suit their business, happened to be in the middle of the irregular square, and opposite the high, grey town-hall, with its crumbling tower, and the town arms above its arched doorway.

The Misses Hislop, Bride's present patronesses, were no ordinary workwomen, and kept no shop, not

even a sale-room. In Scotland, forty or fifty yearr ago, what was called the mantua-making and millinery was not unfrequently a refuge for spinsters of good birth and nurture, in dependent or destitute circumstances, and who engaged in it as a genteel calling and an honourable means of gaining a livelihood. The Misses Hislop were the daughters of a deceased army surgeon, who had ended his days at Silverton, leaving several well-connected, portionless, elderly daughters, accustomed to the best society in the town, to which no one disputed their claim, after they had for a score of years maintained themselves by their own industry. Old Silverton acted in a right spirit in this matter; and so small was the number of eligibles, that, in fact, the Misses Hislop were in the utmost request, to make up the Minister's whist table, or complete the circle at loo in the house of Mr. Halliburton, the law agent of Silvercraigs and other landed proprietors, the imposing power on which the maiden ladies of Silverton chose to lean, the stately hands into which they confidingly committed their diminutive capitals. Mr. Halliburton was quite a princely man, whom the timid, the simple, and the vulgar revered—a haughty man, far more inaccessible than Silvercraigs, whom he served. For that matter, firm, sensible Mrs. Leslie experienced some steadily-met opposition, before Mrs. Halliburton and Mrs. Fowler acknowledged, with secretly crushed malice, the feuar's daughter as their lady paramount.

It would have been barbarous to deprive the Misses Hislop of the great sweetener of their existence—their unforfeited rank, with its 'Open, Sesame' to the Minister's and Mr. Halliburton's drawing-rooms—those jealously-guarded sanctuaries, with their upright, painted cane chairs, their scanty, scolloped window-curtains, and their snug little suppers—the friar's chicken and the stewed oysters winding up the decorous, gossiping, staple, twice-a-week dissipation of aristocratic Silverton.

The Misses Hislop sometimes drank tea with their humbler customers, or, like Mrs. Fowler, drove out, and honoured, for their stomachs' sake, thriving, overflowing farmhouses; but while they did not despise the meal, and potatoes, and dairy produce so profusely gifted away, they no more reckoned themselves on a level with the generous gudewives than with Queen Charlotte, and regarded admitting their daughters to a quarter's experience in running up widths, and manufacturing welting, and attaching buttons, as a great condescension on their side. Certainly the gudewives sent their bairns to be day-boarders with the Misses Hislop as much to bring them in and to teach them manners, as to enable them to cut out and stitch their gowns.

The Misses Hislops' establishment numbered a well-grown servant and half-a-dozen regular sewing girls and apprentices, besides amateurs. Miss Anne Hislop usually sat in the workroom overlooking the labours of the girls. Miss Hislop occupied the little

parlour, with the settee below the gilt-framed mirror near the table with the fine old china and the pasteboard gimcracks; here she received their lady friends, and here Bride was now and then invited to drink tea, with or without Mrs. Leslie, most frequently by herself, as the Lady rarely went abroad without the Laird, and the Misses Hislop were seldom able to do justice to Silvercraigs' company. Although Bride had known and looked up to my Lady Clonmellick, she had not found her so awful as the Misses Hislop—they were more like Mrs. Anastasia, but Bride would not admit them to an equality there, she thought her dear Mrs. Anastasia, whom she longed to kiss again, a thousand times better—just so much the better as she was the more original. Positively Bride could not eat, so refined were the Misses Hislops' appetites, and so nicely in proportion their genteel tea, their tiny plate of biscuits, and shavings of bread-and-butter. She required no hints to move softly—not on account of the impression made on her by the grand ideas that the sprawling orange pheasant on the satin piece was worked by Miss Anne when she was at 'the boarding-school,' and that Miss Hislop had used the backboard to improve her carriage at the time she was learning dancing—these were only marvels to the farmers' daughters—but because of the universal air of antiquated fragility, as if a rough touch would be desecration and destruction.

The Misses Hislop were tall, bony, erect women

(the backboard had done its duty), with harsh features, but undeniably with a certain distinction and honour stamped on their rigidity. Miss Hislop had attained a turban and a scarf; Miss Anne still affected tippets and a hair cap, whose broad headband was clasped on the forehead with a small buckle of sparkling Bristol crystals.

When the Misses Hislop walked out, they showed, according to the seasons, satin or gauze mantles, with velvet hunting-caps bordered by sable fur; or, if they merely proposed a visit in the town, and the weather was mild, with no greater shelter than squares of black lace flung over turban and hair cap, and tent-shaped rich green-and-white brocaded parasols that survived a dozen of summers.

Miss Hislop was the better-natured, Miss Anne the cleverer of the two; Miss Anne was more admired, Miss Hislop better liked.

The Misses Hislop had owned another sister in their band, who, as they always felt, forgot her dignity, outraged propriety, and disgraced the family by a low marriage. She had forfeited her shadowy spinster rights for love, and the quiet, second-rate home of the Silverton schoolmaster. Death atoned for this transgression, as it blots out many another; and the Misses Hislop inherited the entire guardianship of an orphan niece brought up by them, their assistant and successor, but not altogether in the rank of her seniors.

Jean Blamire was only a year younger than Bride

Fielding, but was not therefore thoughtful and prudent,—she was giddy and unsettled; for Jean was constitutionally as warm-hearted and quick-tempered as Bride Fielding; and instead of the indulgence of Bride's natural, healthful home, the Misses Hislop, with good intentions, were ever drawing the reins of discipline hard and tight over Jean's young head, which would accordingly bolt and swerve to right and left. But admitting Jean's snatches of freedom in speech and action, she was still true-hearted and honest-minded.

Bride Fielding knew, though the Misses Hislop were entirely ignorant of the interlude, and the rest of the world had but once faintly guessed it, that there had been love passages of more serious meaning than romping encounters now and then at Silvercraigs, Sweethope, and Silverton, between Jean Blamire and one of the young Buchans of the Shaw —that son who had fallen from a loaded corn-cart two harvests ago, and been a sickly invalid ever afterwards. These were at an end; not that Jean obviously deserted her lover in his fatal infirmity, but that he furnished evidence by many a chilling proof that he renounced the connexion, and did not desire her sympathy. What was his old gay love to Archie Buchan's sore knowledge but a part of that 'lust of the eye' and 'pride of life' from which he had been violently severed? But Bride Fielding and Jean Blamire became friends.

Bride was pleased to see that already, three hours

before the detachment from Kier were to march into the town, little ragged boys, playing truant, were congregating, and indefatigable gossips hanging about shop doors, criticising the magistrates' plans beforehand.

The change from the morning air and country landscape, to the close, littered work-room, was not very agreeable. The spring sunshine fell rather disparagingly on the hard benches, the common deal table, the shreds and furnishings—even on the silk, broadcloth, and fine printed calico, and articles of wearing apparel of every degree, from Mrs. Leslie's strong, dark lutestring, to the silk, little stronger than Persian, of the ambitious spouse of the tobacconist. At the same time, the Misses Hislop had been known to demur at customers engaged in lower lines than the grocery and silk-mercery callings.

Bride was thankful for the privilege of the Misses Hislops' windows, and strong to bear any little intermediate discomfort. She laid aside her bonnet and shawl, settled the folds of her Irish fichu, smoothed her auburn curls, and sat down to wait the event, taking care to be near Jean Blamire.

Jean was far above the middle size, of a noble mould, with regular features, a clear, pale complexion, fully opened, lively grey eyes, and an abundance of dark hair, dressed in long bows, so as to increase her height by several inches. In private, Jean was very plainly dressed, in accordance with her youth and subordinate position; but her brown

watered calico gown did not detract from her gallant beauty, beaming as it did through a cordial smile and a rapid play of countenance. Poor Jean Blamire was a Silverton toast, as well as Silvercraigs' niece, 'genteel' Bride Fielding.

The Misses Hislop were strict; they did not approve of talking during work hours, unless in reply to an observation of Miss Anne's, and debarred any pair of eyes from wandering to the windows; but this was not an ordinary day, and common rules were relaxed, and Miss Fielding was a stranger, and franked like a Member of Parliament's letter. Jean Blamire broke the silence with 'Oh! Miss Anne'—Jean always addressed her aunts as Miss Hislop and Miss Anne—'have you heard the message Miss Betty Ainslie sent last night to Baillie Lindesay?'

Jean was admonished to mind her seam and the presence of her betters, and let the town's clashes alone. But Miss Anne, thawing under her excited curiosity, ended with an inconsistent permission to the delinquent to finish her communication—'Since you have begun your story, Jean Blamire, what did Miss Betty want with Baillie Lindesay?'

'I had not begun, Miss Anne, but it's all the same.' Jean had a degree of rattle and recklessness about her, the development of original spirit and decision, manacled by injudicious severity. 'Miss Betty only came back from the South last night. I saw her post-chaise drive by myself; and the minute she heard tell of the prisoners, she despatched her compliments

to the Baillie, and bespoke his cellar for her and Nanny the first night they should be in need.'

'Miss Betty's a wise woman, yet I think her outlook might extend beyond herself and her servingwoman. Did the Baillie give his consent at once?'

'Yes, if she would allow him to mount guard on her and his dozen or two of mouldy wine-bottles; and that was just a wily excuse, for everybody kens how Miss Betty hates nowt and men.'

'Hold your tongue, Jean Blamire!' exclaimed Miss Anne, in fresh displeasure. 'Miss Betty is a lady born and bred, and come of the Ainslies of Hattonburn, cousins twice removed from my grandmother. I ken not to what more honourable office a notary public, the son of a writer body, could aspire, if it were not to wait on and protect Miss Betty and the like of her.'

Jean's tongue trembled to prolong the conversation, for silence and Jean were aliens to each other. 'But, Miss Anne, do you think the French will try to rise up and murder us: only two score of lads, and many of them with unhealed wounds, with broken heads, or wanting arms or legs—and our men—and we have ten times the number—whole, hearty, and free?'

'There's two score of French in sight, Jean,' Miss Anne said, oracularly, 'but how many behind the stour at their backs, you gowk?'

'But if we speak them fair, Miss Anne?'

'Speak them fair? Open your mouth to one

prodigal, if you dare! And now be quiet, I tell you. See to the puckering of that sleeve, and take tent that Bell Pratt does not lend a twist to Mrs. Halliburton's epaulettes.'

Miss Anne's president's chair was placed in the window, and to-day she could not resist glancing out herself, or sufficiently scold any girl whom she caught peeping past her, in the way of following her example. The situation of the Misses Hislops' tall, narrow house, whose publicity they affected to regret, while they really piqued themselves on the cheerfulness of their view, was a continual snare to their workwomen. The little bustle of Silverton occurred within its square. There the corn market, the fish market, and the flesh market were held; there stood Mr. Halliburton's office, a heavy building, enlivened by the pert or ponderous heads of clerks starting up at every outlet; there was the respectable, spacious George Inn, ably managed by stout Mrs. More, fit to take in hand with dinners for the gentlemen of the hunt, and suppers for the county balls; there blushed Baillie Lindesay's modest, but solidly-founded chambers; there bloomed—a greater attraction—the flaunting draper's counter of Deacon Martin. On a great fair day, the market-place was quite grand in its gaiety to Jean Blamire, and formidable in its crowd to the Misses Hislop. On this April forenoon, numerous vehicles were driving into the yard of the George; the Provost and Baillies were in deep consultation before the town-hall; the Sheriff-substitute,

with his perfection of tie and knee-breeches, was looming in sight; the schoolboys were waxing more and more clamorous, whooping like young savages, and raising a sudden hue and cry for tar-barrel, squibs, and crackers, in prospect of an evening improvement of the holiday.

Miss Anne felt it incumbent upon her to suspend her statutes, because it was a national demonstration —no common show that was about to defile before them. 'Bairns, you may lay by your tasks for ten minutes, that you may witness what is to be seen, but you'll be modest, and keep back from the gaze of the mob. I trust that you took note of what the Minister told you last Sabbath, that, in place of repining, we are bound to rejoice at the vanquishing of the children of Ammon, and at having them brought among us, it may be in secret to our fear and trembling, but outwardly smitten hip and thigh;' and Miss Anne, amidst a murmur of applause, did not disdain to take advantage of her tall figure, in ranking herself behind the wavering groups of heads speedily clustered about the small windows, and serving her as a safe screen, over which she could look her fill in dignified reserve.

The prisoners were to enter the town at eleven o'clock. The inn windows were already filled with country spectators, while apprentices and journeymen, let out for the occasion, slower-footed master-tradesmen and shopkeepers, a considerable sprinkling of red coats, and a plentiful mixture of women and

children, were speedily constituting a crowd, and jostling each other for precedence.

Silvercraigs, on his white mare, rode into the square, and instinctively planted himself at the head of the magistracy.

The Misses Hislops' girls, feasting on the details, whispered remarks, and pointed out their acquaintances below.

'What a bonnie day!'

'They've only eight miles to travel, and will be in belyve.'

'Yonder is Alick Purves, the master-builder, and his masons.'

'And Mary Pride and her cousin.'

Jean Blamire leant down on the window-sill, a little aside from the others, and next Miss Fielding.

'There is Nancy Balfour, the straw-hat maker, with a fine scarlet shawl, up at one of Baillie Lindesay's windows. Miss Fielding, your white one is not half so grand.'

'I like mine best,' persisted Bride.

'I dinna ken,' Jean continued, abstractedly; 'after all, Nancy works hard for her mother and herself, and nobody hears her word. Would you believe it, Miss Fielding, for as grey and dry as she looks now, she had her sweetheart, handsome, and leal, and well-to-do; and Nancy might have been a prosperous wife with the best, but he fell into a decline, and now Nancy's an old maid, maintaining herself as cannily as she can. She was her own mistress,

and she had her mother to work for,' Jean subjoined, in a lower tone. 'She's a proud, cold woman, and she would not think much of a lassie like me, but I think she's a good woman—Miss Nancy Balfour. Miss Fielding, did you hear that the Burns are to have a lodger? Sirs, you are well off to get one all to yourself out at Silvercraigs.'

'And they our enemies, and so wild!' Bride objected, reproachfully.

'Hout, he'll not be wild to you; and there is Silvercraigs and the rest of the men; and what does young Sweethope say? I see him this minute, Miss Fielding, on the inn steps.'

'I don't care what young Home says, Jean; I'm not for him, and I do not know that he's for me.'

'But everybody says so, and "what everybody says maun be true"—that is a Scotch proverb, Miss Fielding. The auld Mistress of Sweethope is wearying sore for her daughter-in-law, poor body! She never had a daughter of her own.'

'She'll weary long for me, Jean. You may keep him to yourself.'

'But if he's not wanting me, Miss Fielding, nor me breaking my heart after your cast-off wooer? You are a lady, Miss Fielding, and as bonnie—as bonnie as Miss Hay Borthwick of St. Margaret's, and you may have the value of the Silvercraigs' wheatstacks, but you're not so far before the rest of us, for all that,' asserted queer, rebellious Jean Blamire.

J , were in perfect good humour in her banter, but . . . e Fielding's face flushed like fire, and her eyes glistened with the moisture of anger and wounded feeling. Jean Blamire's half-shrewd, half-random strokes hit hard at the heiress and the old Dublin belle.

'Jean Blamire, you're bold. When did I pretend to be better than you or any one? I'll not suffer you to speak so to me.'

'Fie! for shame, Miss Fielding, to be so wrathful at a joke. Tell Miss Anne, if you please.'

Each felt that she had gone too far. Bride was already relenting, and willing to be pacified. What Jean called 'casts-out' were frequent enough with the quick-spoken, unceremonious girls—our aged mothers or grandmothers—as sincere as children, but as single-hearted also, agreeing again within an hour, loving each other faithfully for the terms of whole lives.

'I believe Silvercraigs repents of his bargain,' observed Bride; 'he would be angry if he heard you, Jean.'

When a distant huzza, and a general movement on the stage at their feet, usurped their attention.

'They were coming,' some person had given notice. Every man was shouldering his neighbour, and stretching his neck and drawing a long breath as the prisoners turned the corner, and marched into the market-square of Silverton.

A detachment of soldiers from an English in-

fantry regiment, walking in regular order, and subjo illy accoutred, an officer leading them—a sight rare in itself, though they had their own regiment at Silverton; next in their strange uniform or coloured clothes, affording all manner of contrasts and irregularities of costume, the prisoners, forty and upwards; and on each side, stretching away in a train behind them, the smart body of Kier militia.

The soldiers crossed the market-place, and fell to the right and left, before Mr. Leslie of Silvercraigs and the magistrates. The little people hanging on, could not resist an exultant shout, while a rising murmur ran through the seniors—a curious text, with an ample commentary.

'That the stuff that tries British grenadiers!' a man's voice exclaimed, contemptuously; 'I'm vexed I came to lose my good opinion of our service.'

'Man, see to that braid back, and yon shoulder-head, and there's a fellow glowering and glooming like a wild cat. I'll wager, Michael, he was not idle at Barossa,' remonstrated a companion.

'I wonder if it is clean out of mind,' said again the first speaker, a sulky, sottish, ill-conditioned groom, brimful of malice at any time; and raising his voice, he suddenly called out, 'Hey! lads, Barossa and the Nile for ever!' An alert, indignant hush from the magistrates silenced the insult.

'Poor creatures! poor creatures! you'll each be somebody's body,' a woman's voice repeated, pitifully.

'Hold your tongue, cummer,' another burst in, with high-pitched, quivering, passionate rebuke. 'Let the Shirrie and the Baillies stap the villains into the jail—the cauldest, darkest cell—they'll not rot there, between black, dripping walls, crawling with vermin, like my son, my dear laddie, with ne'er a hand to hold up his head, or give him a cup of water; better he had been left stiff and stark on the first of his battle-fields.'

Dark, thin profiles, keen, piercing eyes, heads that rose like kings, on the day of Austerlitz, hearts that beat with wild devotion for '*le petit caporal*,' impenetrable faces, such as lived to baffle the lynx-eyed scrutiny of Fouché; elderly men, with the hard, fierce look acquired in the horrors of the first Revolution—men who might have dipped their handkerchiefs in the noble blood running in torrents beneath the guillotine; young lads taken in their first skirmish; bent and broken men of hard campaigns, and the round of a dozen battle-fields; some in their blue and silver, worn threadbare, bonnets *de police* and common calf-skin knapsacks, some in private clothes, with enormous cravats and high collars—all assembled in the quiet Scotch town of Silverton. A few with haughty, bitter looks, two or three scrutinizing wistfully the little market-square, as if it conjured up some far-away, familiar, provincial *place;* by far the most part chatting and laughing together nonchalantly, glancing here and there with the careless curiosity of mere idle strangers—a philosophic

endurance of humiliation and fatigue, and a mirthful enjoyment even of their own extremity, which amazed and scandalized their masters.

Miss Anne was particularly provoked. 'The bold, black-a-vised blackguards; the Grassmarket would not daunt them.'

'They're just like other folk—other Frenchmen, I mean,' observed Bride, a little discontentedly. These fire-eaters—they were but a company of tired, travel-stained, conquered men, whether struggling against the yoke, or wearing it lightly.

'Why, Miss Fielding, what did you expect to see? Giants, like those we used to read of in *Jack the Giant-killer*, or wild men of the woods, like Christie of the Cleek, whom I was so feared for when I was a little bairn at school, lest he should be alive still, and catch me some winter afternoon or summer gloaming, when I strayed beyond the town? You'll not doubt now about admitting one weary lad among the bold men of Silvercraigs; you'll not sit up to keep ward and watch on him, as the Miss Auchterlonies did with their Highlander's bonnet and feathers.'

When the prisoners halted before the town-hall, all at once bethinking himself of his improper priority, with the representatives of law and majesty at his back, Silvercraigs manœuvred to retreat, at least into a line with the Sheriff and Provost, and notwithstanding his heart-burning, impulsively, without counting costs, uncovered his head courteously, and bowed to

the whole party of prisoners. Instantly, nearly every hand was raised to return the salute. The bystanders were not edified by the slight, generous, mutual acknowledgment. The gentry, great and small, half foreign-bred themselves, depending on strange kickshaws, sour wines, and soft silks and laces—little recked they of good blood, if it were not their own, spilt like water in the strife. Miss Anne's tact and prudence for a moment forsook her:—'Silvercraigs never could keep his own place, never—that was an old story.'

Bride did not think Silvercraigs in error; since her eyes were opened, she was sorry for these poor, banished strangers—a sorrow already tinged with contempt; for she had ceased to believe them spies—only beaten soldiers; and although Bride had learned difficult lessons, she had always been one on whom the sun shone—a much-made-of girl, tempted now and then to fancy her world at her feet. Nevertheless, although in her eyes they were disgraced men, Bride was glad that they had received one token of kindness, one gesture of welcome to this town of Silverton—to which she herself had come lately with the feeling that every face was strange to her; and here there was not only coldness, but hostility and compulsion heaped on the shoulders slouched under the captive's load.

As Bride grew languid over the events of the day, and gazed out rather indifferently at the crowd, thinking how much gayer was the 'Brooke,' how much finer a throng in Old Dublin, a presentation

new set of colours to a favourite regiment,
ıg sail to join 'the fighting fifth,' and whoop
madmen as they tore after Picton — a face
ıg the prisoners caught her eye, and made her
wildly, close her eyes for a second, and long to
er hand on her heart. Was it the momentary
lection of the country which produced the illu-
—carrying her back, in a moment, to the June
:r at Blake's boarding-house, the Clonmellicks,
Jugents, Councillor Trelawney, the player, the
:s—bridegroom and groomsman; the toasts they
lrunk, the tea she had made, the tunes Dolly
:nt had played, everything, to the open windows
:he roses—and, again, in another flight of ima-
ion, to the rainy night, the bright, solitary fire,
ght, ease, and indulgence, and Frank Boyle, wet
lespairing, in the watchman's coat, and lantern,
ıg himself in upon her to take the last look of
ıistress?

hat vagary was this, and could it be infectious?
ıs surely as she first moved aside, and then
ıelled herself to resume her position, and stare
at the scene and the actors, a pair of eyes in
ıand below, magnetized by her fascinated regard,
raised and fixed on her in blank wonder and agita-
and the dark blood flew, like the ruddy
mers in the northern sky, across the half-blonde
of some Norman or Breton among his Gallic
ıren.

ıe sight was over to the world at large. The
:ge and Mr. Halliburton's cast long shadows

across the causeway; the soldiers from Kier prepared to resume their march; the prisoners had been ushered into the badly-floored, dusky town-hall, to pass through the necessary forms, in presence of the authorities, before they were dispersed to their appointed quarters. The crowd melted away as swiftly as it had collected, each unit to his or her hackneyed customary occupation; only the country people completed a wasted day by loitering in the streets, accomplishing a little shopping, and dropping into a convenient friend's house for a chance dinner, a glass of ale or punch, or an early tea. None but the volatile or inveterate idler swelled the lists of boys and girls who perseveringly besieged the town-hall, that they might form a separate escort to each Frenchman conducted in turn to his destination by David Thompson, the town's officer. Miss Anne grasped again her relinquished sceptre, and wielded it over the subjects of her little kingdom.

There was nothing left for Bride to do, but to struggle out of the sickness which, not even the restless eyes of Jean Blamire, with their useless length of eyelashes, had observed, and to return to her friend the Laird's, and to his rash, short-sighted patriotism.

True as the girl was, the touching memories of her life had been growing fainter until to-day, when they were so vividly revived. Bride could not call it pleasure; she could not call it pain—save that it was a gasping uncertainty—a whirl of brain and heart

with the dryness and the sinking of spirit which precedes the fresh fever when notable shadows of the past, always old in their perennial youth, always shrouded in the sad-coloured mantle—our Samuels rise up on our present way. Bride must not be strangely, wretchedly deceived; she must watch, and note, and sum up, like any barrister in a trial—with greater stake than ever barrister played. She must be cool, impervious to emotion, ready of resource, as the case might be; like the women of the French revolution and the Irish rebellion—proud idols, or warm hearts, or light, careless tempers till the time came—whose bodily presence, after they had done their duty and were every-day beings again, safe, elderly, aged, she had often seen face to face. Ah! keen, true Mrs. Anastasia was right; it was very exciting and interesting to hear the narrative as a tale that was told, but it was hard, hard to do this out-of-the-way work; cruel to bear this mutual trial—better for the principals, except as a crown of martyrdom—far better for them mostly, even morally, to be permitted to be matter-of-fact, common-place men and women from their cradles to their graves.

Bride was eager to meet the prisoner allotted to Silvercraigs; eager to question him, yet when should she ever find courage, opportunity, or speech? nervous, too, so nervous about identity. Oh! those long, fresh hours at Silvercraigs, wont to be so fully occupied and so diversified in engagements; oh! the torture of Mrs. Leslie's curiosity, which

she would have formerly deemed so staid and modest; oh! the blank disappointment, let it be of tribulation, when Silvercraigs arrived at home alone; and the climax, when David Thomson, the town's officer, appeared with the candidate, and Bride knew him to be the same, the very same, at whom she had looked fully, in her unconsciousness, at the Cross of Silverton, and would never regard fairly again. But Bride was less astonished this time—less dismayed; whatever the consequences, it was the second shock, and after the first, the coincidence seemed something natural, nay, inevitable.

The Lady was superintending the covering of the table, and the dishing of her substantial stereotyped dainties—the veal soup, the fat fowls, the bacon, the first curds and cream of the season, the ale, wine, and spirits, fit for a hungry man, wayworn, from a camp. Silvercraigs was in bad humour, as we often are when our fine projects are fulfilled; he had not the solace of avoiding what was too much for him; he must stand here on his own grey shred hearth-rug and receive David Thomson's trust off his hands.

David Thomson—one of a class like the publicans, obnoxious to both rulers and people, a rough, forward man, invulnerable to rebuffs—acting on authority, walked straight into the house and into the parlour, followed by his companion, and addressed himself to the Laird.

'I've brought you your luck, Silvercraigs; no bad, as likely a customer as I've seen yet; can speak a

mouthful of common-sense that a body may understand. The Colonel, he's dining with the Shirrey, and will doubtless be out the morn.'

'Very well, Davie,' Silvercraigs answered, coldly. 'I suppose you'll be for a seat and a drink for your job.'

'No job of mine, Silvercraigs; it is yours.'

'It is no job of mine,' retorted Silvercraigs, shortly.

'You should ken best,' admitted Davie, not at all discomfited. 'But what ails you, Laird? Have the neeps failed, or has the Lady ta'en the strums?'

'Never you mind, man,' the Laird answered him, surlily turning his back upon him, while he took the refreshment so universally given, that to have withheld it would have been a slur upon the hospitality of the house as well as a slight to the messenger.

A stiff bow was all the notice which Silvercraigs had yet bestowed on the stranger, leaning against the door, and regarding the domicile and its inhabitants with a sharp glance. Mrs. Leslie went up to him with a grave, fluttered friendliness.

'I'm glad to see you, Sir; I'll try to make you comfortable. We're bound to pleasure a Frenchman, since Silvercraigs came safe out of France.'

'I'm much obliged, trouble yourself as little as possible,' he answered at once, speaking distinctly, with only the occasional foreign accent or idiom, which would cling to him to his dying day.

David Thomson slapped him approvingly on the shoulder. 'Hear till him; few of them down the town are blessed with tongues like that. Faith! some of them could not cry water, though the town were in a low; but he maun have been in biggit land, this one, or tried the trade before, eh! Silvercraigs? You have fallen on your feet, Sir,' ran on Davie, his bonnet still between his knees, and his hands full. 'What shall you call him, Mrs. Leslie? The gudewives are dumbfoundered with their lodgers' titles; they speer and better speer, but they cannot manage the first lith of their outlandish names. You would split your sides to hear them.'

Beyond the little table in the window a still woman's figure sat motionless; but at this moment an indescribable rustle passed over it, like a fresh breath of wind floating over frozen snow.

'Have no fear, Madam,' the Frenchman assured Mrs. Leslie, quietly; 'I have neither a long nor a hard address. And there is the name Bayle, with the English also. I am called Francis Bayle—that will not try much time and patience.'

Bayle! so near, but not the very signification—even as the face, so like, yet another from that which was once so tangible, full of life and humanity, but which she had only seen in dreams for a weary time, alas! a hopeless time. Was the single altered letter the flaw which was to mar the whole evidence? Was it a natural accident, at first suffered to go on unnoticed by one who had few hopes and cares, or was it

a deliberate disguise, strong in its slightness, of one who sought concealment?

'Bayle? that's just our Baillie,' exclaimed Davie; 'or Captain Frank; no mortal could desire a gentler or a scrimper pair of words; or Francie. Mrs. Leslie, you've seen Master Francie, the Laird's uncle, who spent a fortune over the cards, and syne shot himself in that ill place, London. Silvercraigs could tell you tales of him, if he would speak. 'Deed, I deserve my handsel for fitting you so neatly. There, I maun be done with my cracks and be off; I'm sair wanted in Silverton the night. Gude day to your bright een, Miss, keeking out of the corner—hout! hout! no offence. Silvercraigs, I hope you'll find your speech soon; and I drink to you and Captain Francie's becoming better acquent. Mrs. Leslie, Madam, you've the wit that's o't;' and with as little hesitation in his exit as his entrance, David Thomson marched out, having succeeded in affronting three out of his four auditors.

Silvercraigs' chafing fume sought vent.

'The bragging, chattering, leeing fool,' he ejaculated, with great disgust; 'I don't keep house-room for shirrey-mayors. Davie Thomson is to make no trade here.'

The condemnation was sufficient indication of Silvercraigs' ungenial mood. Silvercraigs stood, his broad shoulders helping to obscure the light, while Mrs. Leslie summoned Elspie to carry up the knapsack the stranger was unstrapping to the bed-closet,

his sole independent refuge, and that accorded grudgingly. Bride had not dared to cast more than the briefest glances at 'the new man' standing by the door. She felt by instinct that he was the darkened picture of a reality that had once flashed brightly and ardently upon her. He was different enough from those upon whose masculine make Silvercraigs set store. This Frenchman was a young fellow of some height, but spare and slender, and after an example that his comrades began to show, bearded, as Bride thought, like a warlock, so that but little was seen of a face rather sallow as a German's than olive with a French oliveness. Altogether, he was foreign-looking, this poor lad, in spite of the certainly English cut of his latest coat; but his carriage was so firm, his heavy brow, and that was unhidden, so steadfast, and his blue eye so bright and cold, that he seemed to claim an eminence, not only among his fellows, but his conquerors.

'Will you not come forward? Will you not take a chair, Sir?' inquired the Lady, looking at the Laird.

At last Silvercraigs assumed his place, and kicking aside a stool, did his part gruffly. 'Sir,' he said, 'make what you can of your billet till better offers. My words, and wants, and friends, are all of the good, honest British kind, but I've broken bread with Frenchmen, and so you're welcome to mine as long as you choose to partake of it.'

Captain Francis lifted his head, and looked

steadily, and smiled slightly, and gave an answer which proved that he fully comprehended Silvercraigs' words.

'I am your King George's prisoner. I am a debtor to no man. Since King George will not let me go, I merit food and shelter of his people, and because I cannot choose, I accept it, Monsieur, at your hands.'

There was scant cordiality between Silvercraigs and his impressed guest, and so best, perhaps, to begin as they would undoubtedly end. His fields, his cattle, and gear, were his king's and the town's, and, moreover, they were in pledge for that ancient truce; but Silvercraigs' conversation—his frank, rude thoughts, and expressions, like the 'hand' of the grey, grim Douglas, were 'his own.' The Laird considered his *rôle* performed. He helped the Frenchman largely, and attended punctually to his requirements at table, but he addressed him rarely and briefly—his talk was on the usual topics and to the usual hearers. He would go to Forden ploughing-match. The *rack* was not burnt yet on the Silverton marches. He had heard of a new martingale. And 'Elspie' (the Laird, like the bigger Laird Monkbarns, repudiated male attendance at table), 'mind Miss Fielding. Bride, Bride Fielding, we'll have a glass of wine together after our travels.'

There was no mystery about Bride, there could be no misapprehension where she was concerned, yet when Bride lifted her eyes, the Frenchman sat, not a muscle moving, opposite her. She must have lost

her old power to flush his cheek and fire his eye—suffering and exile, change and time, had drained the Irish love which she remembered so fond and fervent, and to which all Scottish liking had been so lukewarm.

This Frenchman had none of the endless volubility of his nation—the lighter side of their evil principles and practices—what Elspie termed 'the endless gallivanting of the wild splorers.' He was tame either by nature or circumstances, self-contained instead of gasconading, taciturn where he ought to have been incorrigibly lively. Certainly there was no inducement to volatility—Silvercraigs was absent in mind; Mrs. Leslie, unlike herself, uneasy; Bride, a cipher. A great metamorphosis had come over Silvercraigs; and how could it be otherwise, when the Laird, the presiding genius, in spite of his efforts to be reconciled to his fate, remained stony and stubborn, he who was tempestuous, but sunshiny like a March wind? The representative of the old lover, 'if this be he,' was no improvement to the circle; owned no special attraction, as Bride was bound to confess with bitterness, unless it were the moustache, which she could scarcely name, and the sound of the occasional odd stammer, which she compared inwardly to the lisp of 'gentle Lord James,' that doughty champion of old Scotch history, of whom she had been reading lately. The sole account he gave of himself, the single allusion to his career, was a grave, short jest at the company with which

David Thomson had gifted him—the principal promotion he had gained and retained in his military life. 'I marched from the department,' he explained, 'and we went abroad—north and south—and had encounters without consequence; and I came within flight of your musket-balls, and had the misfortune to be taken; and I will as soon be a marshal as a captain, but with all my heart, if you wish it, only there are as good privates in the French service.'

But Mrs. Leslie adhered to the captaincy, in spite of the remonstrance. Private Francie, if he had been a private, sounded singular, and did not come so glibly from her lips; she could not style a strange man Francie; she did not like to meddle with the amphibious French and English Bayle. Captain Francie was unmistakeable, and suitable for all parties—for Miss Fielding and for Elspie; and the lad was wonderfully douce for a deluded Papist; and had his mother pined for his face these weary years, and would he seem her own lad, if spared to return to her from his bondage a bearded, proud, careworn man—the doubts and dreads of such a separation, what could approach it?

The spring gloaming, the sweetest of all seasons if the night is not charged with frost, had descended upon Silvercraigs; the veil of mist over the Silver water and the ash-trees, the warm breath of cattle, and the smoke from Silvercraigs' pipe, filled the yard. Mrs. Leslie, knitting in hand, stood among the

clean straw of the long cow-house, watching the streams of milk drawn by the servants' able fingers from Spinkie, Queen, Lady Leslie, and their brindled, dun, or white sisters; while the company of the Lady softened but did not silence the chat of Elspie and her neighbour, and the lazier tongues of the men fresh from the horse-suppering, and gathered, some sitting, some standing, about a half-taken-down stalk, in gossiping repose;—not one of these blunt retainers but was full of affectionate respect for the mistress, not one but would have burnt his fingers or broken his head for her benefit.

Bride remained in the darkening parlour, meditating feverishly on the day's occurrences, and breathlessly bent on detecting the least noise from the flat above, where the new inmate of Silvercraigs had been conducted to inspect his bed-closet, and where he still lingered; although Bride was certain that he could not move above a couple of yards in any direction from his clean, simple bed, nor see his hand before him, with his two panes of borrowed light; and—hark!—she could faintly distinguish the notes of a strange tune; the several parts taken up and whistled mechanically again and again. The precipitate, persevering retreat was in itself a sign; and, as the brimming pails and empty buckets which had held the calves' supper, the dim horn-lanterns lighting the accompanying train, turned into the roomy kitchen, and thence into the narrow slit of a dairy for the operation of straining the milk,—when the

men were dispersing to the Cotton, where Katie Drysdale was closing her door,—when Silvercraigs had repaired to that ingle whose charms were the burden of a yeoman song,—when a bat startled Bride by suddenly flapping its wings against the coarse, thick glass,—then the Frenchman descended from his dormitory, found the ever-free transit to the yard, and walked out to contemplate the evening star, a few paces from the threshold.

Captain Francie's descent afforded great satisfaction to the subordinates of the establishment once released from their evening vocation; although the female department huddled themselves together, stifling hysterical laughter, and exciting each other by whispers of 'Gude guide us—sic a worricow; but he's not armed, and he is fell peaceful for his ain sake;—if he had his sword and pistols, and a score of puggies like himself at his back, and stood on kenned ground, he would tell a different story.'

Bride smiled to herself with woful indignation, and continued her watch. The object of their animadversions did nothing more to astonish the population of Silvercraigs that night, except by civilly waving off the Lady—who went herself to the door to warn him that the supper—the kidneys, the sweetbreads, the sliced round, the bread and cheese, were on the table awaiting the Laird's blessing—assuring her that he dispensed with an evening meal—an *outré*, meagre system, so opposed to Mrs. Leslie's experience, that she tarried another moment to repre-

sent to the handful that the Laird's wilfulness had imposed upon her, and which his backwardness now transferred to her entirely—as if she had not burdens enough already—the inconvenience and danger of sleeping upon an empty stomach; but her new acquaintance would not swerve from his abstemiousness, and retired to rest to save her further scruples.

Bride sat that night in her little room in Silvercraigs, on the front of her bed, where one seldom leans until in extremity, when the early hours of the family had lengthened and deepened to 'mirk midnight.' Such a pleasant little room that nest of hers at Silvercraigs had been till now; and how Bride had come to it and striven to plume her ragged wings, and wink her long-open eyes, like any other wise dove. One of the ash-trees of the yard and the water—a mountain ash this—grew right before the window, so near that the light in high summer would seek in through its foliage green and shimmering. Bride had looked at the bare boughs, and caught herself figuring how they would look in their dark-green dress with the great cast-up white flowers, and pondering whether, when they had changed the costume for russet and coral, Silvercraigs would really take her to stroll after the shearers with him, and glean at will, as he had promised; and imagining what a Scotch harvest-home would resemble; and asking if she would still be there to see the friendly branches leafless in another winter, black-budded during the long spring. Bride had been happy in that little room in Silvercraigs, so peaceful—of course, a different hap-

piness from that of her old nest in Merrion-street, where she used to retire dead-tired, but so excited in the midst of her sleepiness, and where she used to sing the first thing of a morning;—but, strange enough, Bride was not certain whether the preponderance of happiness did not incline to Silvercraigs. When we look back, happiness is a calm visitant easily scared away—belongs mostly to serene days, scenes, and people, when we did not count upon it or look for it. Vanity, pleasure, delight, ecstasy itself—is not happiness; it may be in heaven bliss is chastened into happiness, and happiness is exalted into bliss; and happiness below needs a broad foundation of grace. Why did he wander here to disturb these 'green fields and still waters'—'waters of comfort' they are sometimes termed—yet not he, but another in his place?

Bride rose and walked to her little mirror, pushed back her chestnut curls, and turned sorrowfully first this cheek, and then that, to the reflection. It appeared to her, in her distress, that the glass gave her back a thin face, worn, faded like the rose touched with the frost, and ready to shed its sweet leaves. Bride was wrong, save perhaps for the moment. Few women had suffered less from years. These sweet-natured, lively women, like Madame Sevigné, preserve bloom to the last. Any alteration was rather a refinement in the flesh, and a deepening in the spirit. To him, though unexpectedly encountered far out of her sphere, she was the same—the very same. The great alteration in him prevented his measuring the slight transformation in her—'lovely,' what the

French call '*aimable*,' most kindly, cheery and bonny, and substantially true, without question; for only true natures, like healthy plants, present charming flowers. He had an additional advantage—a man's ground. She had been a remembrance to him—vivid, vital, never erased, though put aside, overlaid for weeks and months. He had been a presence to her, and ah! weakness of humanity, in process of time a false presence—he was the truer of the two; he had loved but her alone. She had loved at last not the capable, impetuous, unfortunate lad, but a shade which would have been not almost, but altogether, fantastic, had it not been for the girl's sense and simplicity. And he was altered, such a history would tell hard on most men—a sad history in the main, a struggling, goading, crushing weight at times. He had quitted Ireland balked and blasted in prospects, and nearly heart-broken. He had found himself in a foreign country, without resources or reliable means; he had beheld John Massey wither away under his remorse; he had seen only one profession for himself—the pursuit of all France—arms. It was in most respects not uncongenial to him, and it presented no insurmountable barrier to the Irishman who had been connected with rebellion, and been taught to regard Sarsfield as a hero. He would be a soldier of fortune under the great Napoleon, who was surely created to be master of the universe, who dazzled him at least as well as weaker men. He would fight faithfully for him against dogged German, savage Russian, slavish Spaniard, and all the

besotted or supercilious allies. What better would the nations get than this new, strong dynasty, and a share in the Chief's greatness, already spreading far and wide? He would fight England in a fair game, on a foreign field. So he took the step which costs all, and awoke to the skeleton beneath the laurels—the foreign woof which it requires Italian suppleness to warp—the common obscurity, unless where the wondrous genius of the one struck sparks of kindred genius from another, and yet another, of varying tribes and tongues—not the hardships, but the horrors of war; and above all, the smothered pain of revived associations, the unnatural torture of divided interests, the secret resentment of his companions, the suspicion dogging his honest service, the bitter cup of the traitor, with but a fraction of the traitor's guilt—Frank Boyle awoke like David, when the King of Gath summoned him to support his army, and he must have risen up and invaded Israel with the host, in return for the shelter and countenance which Achish had afforded him, when only God's great goodness delivered the Anointed King from the life and death of a renegade.

Frank Boyle grew outwardly more and more silent and reserved. He lost his Irish nationality altogether in this respect, and inwardly, as well as outwardly, he was a stern, stoical man.

Ah! if he had come back the same, she thought how she would have rejoiced, what she would have done and borne for him, how the fragrance of life would have revived once more! but he was changed,

and Bride exaggerated the cruel work of years and their events. She had lost the old Frank Boyle, and she did not consider that she met the new in disgrace and misfortune sufficient to render sour and harsh the strong impressive nature which she had known in days and circumstances alike bright.

Bride, like a short-sighted woman, did not mete out causes and effects; she was too moved, too disappointed, too anxious and miserable. He had declined to acknowledge her, and she would not acknowledge him. He need be no more to her than a French prisoner—a real French prisoner and foreign foe. She did not know what dreadful danger he might incur if the truth were published—she was shaken and terrified. But how could she live on when her long, tender dream, interwoven with so much of her life, was abruptly dispelled, withered and wasted, as one October night will blacken the golden marigolds—live on with him in the same hearty, homely, country house for whole summer months, without offering a token? Bride could only sum up all her sorrows with the simple woe-begone adjuration,—

> 'Oh mother, mother, mother, she said,
> So strange it seems to me.'

'Oh Frank, Frank, Frank,' was still the burden of the offended woman's song, when the romance of her history had become dreary as the October marigolds, 'so strange it seems to me.' And then she cried again, 'Was it not God's will?' and sought wildly after her old meekness and patience.

CHAPTER X.

CAPTAIN FRANCIE.

HEN Captain Francie had been a little time an inhabitant of Silvercraigs, Mrs. Leslie considered it an interposition of Providence to find that his poor Roman Catholic nurture did not prevent him from attending the parish church, and reading his Bible on fit occasions like a Christian, while his images were so entirely out of sight that she could trust that his eyes had been opened, and that he had cast them to the moles and the bats. Captain Francie might have told her that there was a race in France, Protestant like herself, nay, who, like her covenanting forefathers, had dared and sacrificed all for the sake of religious freedom. Names which were dear to them were to be found among the poverty-stricken weavers of Spitalfields; kindred not much more hapless had perished, tortured and maddened, in the wild blaze of the Camisard rebellion, under the martyr Claude Brousson, or the recanter Jean Cavalier. Captain Francie was no bigot, though he might have been one who had

adhered long to the landmarks of his fathers, and when he admitted them false, did it with modesty, and covered them as far as a true man might with a reverent mantle.

Captain Francie's record was that of lonely self-discipline, and it needed no foreign education to render his shyness a contrast to the candour of his countrymen. Yet, in many lights, he was a Celt—in his grace of address, his philosophy, his ingenuity, his powers of patient application—Celtic no less in the original vehemence of feeling and disordering fumes of a powerful imagination. Little wonder that the earnest, inexperienced boyish eyes, disabused on their own account, misanthropic and caustic, too, unawares, on public questions, were dazzled—that full of extravagant visions of universal empire, employed for the enlightenment and advancement of mankind, he joined the conscript troops, who reaped from Egyptian sands to Russian snows the fruits of a gigantic personal ambition. Lying on the icy highway, warding off the wolf, and watching for the Cossack; awaiting the dawn by Borodino, where frozen corpses lay thick as fallen leaves; along that weary German road, half drowning with the Pole in the great river; struggling on, on, where men whom he remembered boldest of the bold, gave in, and sank to trace out their backward route by wreaths of dead—French and Saxon dead—in some of these scenes the passionate Irishman learnt other lessons than those of Knockmore and Dublin.

Captain Francie had his short delirium followed by sad sanity; he joined in a reckless game, and paid his share of the heavy forfeit—if he could but have discharged the debt within a reasonable time; but a prisoner, without hope, without wish or power to proclaim the past, and procure the intervention of friends in his behalf, his future was 'written in water.'

Not disabled in body or broken in spirit, with a young man's lingering ambition and acute restlessness, foiled and fettered, not for a month or a year, but for a shadowy unknown period, whose cold grey tints might lengthen over his life. Well, Heaven sent such a man consolation when the extinction of his hopes, the monotony of his idle life, the tyranny of imprisonment, his impotency to retrieve the past, and its lagging consequences, might have turned his head or broken his heart. He recognised that imprisonment was the physician's cure for his ailing and desperately diseased fortunes, and he lifted up his burden manfully. He was a grave man for his years, and where he himself was concerned, he was stern to himself solely; and Mrs. Leslie was soon convinced that in spite of his French extraction, and his soldiering, and more than these, his Roman Catholic communion, Captain Francie was a good lad, a long-suffering, upright lad as ever she had seen.

No inmate of a house could have been more proudly unobtrusive than Captain Francie, yet Sil-

vercraigs and Miss Fielding expressly avoided him. To Silvercraigs it was a continual struggle between old obligations and the duties of hospitality on the one hand, and constitutional prejudice and national animosity on the other. The strange bearing, the very bearded lip and liquid southern tongue were enough to tempt his rancour; while a certain resolute independence in the sojourner in his dwelling, acceptable in itself to the Laird's temper, prevented the stranger's appealing directly to the strong man's forbearance. Silvercraigs sometimes thought that the battle was too much for him, that he had been wrong in braving it, that he ought to apply for the Frenchman's withdrawal—and these doubts did not serve to attach the rugged Laird more to their object.

Bride could bring forward no more distinct cause of ill-will than that Captain Francie disturbed and vexed her more than she would confess. He was not confident or encroaching, as Jean Blamire had predicted; he was polite, but he scrupulously avoided any approach to familiarity, as a growth of his politeness—the politeness founded on a moral as well as intellectual basis, the gentleness of stout, tried manhood. Bride at first allowed herself to marvel at the acquisition, the consideration and tact which steered him through all difficulties—never in the way, and notable only from its effects; but in a short time she protested peevishly that she could not be troubled with manners; she could lift her chair and push past the spinning-wheel or work-table

without help; that Captain Francie would stand aside to the cat or the dog; she would rather be knocked about than treated like a doll, as these Frenchmen behaved to their dressed-up, painted ladies; she knew there was little truth or honesty beneath their smiles and bows.

At the same time, Silvercraigs, though ungracious, was not unhandsome; he introduced the Frenchman formally among his acquaintances, and procured for him civilities, invitations to dinners and tea-tables, where friends of Mrs. Leslie and Miss Fielding presided, as Flora Macdonald did in the very ship in Leith harbour, with dignity and vivacity, and where, as might have been expected from women, they were particularly courteous and gently compassionate to strangers, and strangers 'in durance vile;' such books as the neglected bookshelves sustained were at his command; and, what the Laird held a far higher exertion of good breeding, Captain Francie had leave to shoot and fish in every coppice and stream on Silvercraigs. Captain Francie received these favours not without a certain impatient gratitude, but seldom availed himself of them. The dining-rooms were not too boisterous perhaps for his remembrances, but he was clothing himself more and more in the habits of a philosopher, in harmony with his student's tastes; the stiff drawing-rooms were less in accordance with his inclinations than the simplicity of the Silvercraigs' parlour. A habitual intercourse with the society in the neighbourhood would but

render his peculiar footing in the Laird's house more alien and embarrassing; and it would be a poor return to the hampered Laird to bore him unnecessarily with his company, seeing that they had few things in common, and that even in ordinary conversation, Silvercraigs' slender stock of French having long rusted into oblivion, he could discern no better escape from the mistakes into which his broad dialect and provincial phrases entangled him with his hearer, than raising his voice, and shouting his vernacular, until Captain Francie's ears ached. Captain Francie did not often bring a bronzed gesticulating brother, who esteemed him exceedingly beyond the Saughs in the loan; he did not often sport over the fields; but with characteristic energy, he was always occupied. He drew, he worked in wood with clumsy self-contrived tools, he collected and arranged botanical and entomological specimens upon principles for which he was indebted neither to Jussieu nor Cuvier. Bride Fielding had no artist's knowledge to detect the want of breadth in his slight sketches of Silverton, or the Saughs in the loan, or, what she preferred, the busy yard and outhouses, with their various tenants, every horn and tail. She did not much value his sawing and planing, although he constructed trays for his own nicknacks, and presented duplicates to the Lady, but she did respect the curious water-clock which stood in his bed-closet, and really told him the hour, although she had never heard that such was the boyish toy of the great

English philosopher; and she did laugh, because she could not help it, at the mouse-mill, with which, when Silvercraigs was out of the way one night, he volunteered to divert the Lady, sick Archie Buchan of the Shaw, who had looked in at the Laird's, Elspie and her neighbour, and the ploughmen, declining to prolong the entertainment, for the remarkable reason, that 'it was villanous for the poor mice,' and that he could not consent that they should be shut up in this cage, and she believed that, against clamorous opposition, he actually set off to a hedge-side, and gave the vermin their liberty the moment they had finished their performance.

Bride had no fancy for Captain Francie's loads of withered weeds, and dead moths and beetles, which made her shudder; and besides, he had accumulated boxes and drawers of powders and liquids of every colour and consistency, sufficient to stock the Silverton druggists, quite irrespective of Madame Brinvilliers and her frightful crimes. Bride had been brought up to view such private stores very much as the peasantry regarded Roger Bacon's acquisitions, as something ominous and awful.

In place of courting the good-will of Heather, in anticipation of coursing-matches, Captain Francie did not even solicit the vote of Cock, the rat-catching terrier. He rather noticed the mean curs, and he had ceased to chastise them, although it seemed he had once kept such waifs in training; but he hoarded his devotion for a senseless, troublesome little silky

cocker, which he had picked up ownerless on some battle-field, or received howling and shivering, the bequest of a comrade, and which was now part of his small personal property. Bride generally admired beauty, but she considered barking, begging Flora no dog for a man: she contrasted her with young Sweethope's Newfoundland Neptune, one snap of whose iron jaws would have annihilated Captain Francie's pet, or with a bulldog which she had seen long ago with the boy Frank Boyle, and which he had boasted was of the unbeaten breed of Knockmore. She scorned the fondness that in a bearded man could stoop to carry little Flora under his arm in many a ramble, and bathe and bandage a slight wound in her tiny paw with jealous attention. Flora was Captain Francie's weakness, and he could defend it from a worse foe than young Sweethope's Neptune. The feeding cattle turned out for the first day that season, broke wildly through the yard, and, encountering the Frenchman's plaything, attacked her in concert. The yelp of fright reached her master in his little room, and, descending the stair at two bounds, without pausing to seek a weapon, he burst into the centre of the marauders, and rescued their prey.

Captain Francie, for a fine gentleman and a cracked philosopher, was no coward, even if he had not come from the wars. When the Silver water rose brimming over its borders in the Lammas flood, and carried away the old bridge at the end of the

haughs, and when Mungo, in charge of the tinker's covered cart, ventured to ford the burn, and—scared by the depth of water and strength of the current, and incapable of comprehending or applying the advice which Captain Francie shouted to him from the bank—stuck fast in midstream, Bride was aware that the Frenchman breasted the torrent, and, with toil and danger, managed to drag the floundering horse ashore. Silvercraigs himself admitted generously that it was a mettlesome step for a kid boot. Now, indeed, Mrs. Leslie, was his friend, not only to atone for any aversion with which sectarianism had once assailed him, and to fulfil the Laird's cracked pledge, but as if far down in her thoughtful, constant nature she preserved the visions of the son and heir, the gallant young man for whose protecting, supporting arm she was to have deserted even Silvercraigs. Mrs. Leslie's heart was won by the brave, sensible young Frenchman. She was, in her quiet way, more attentive and indulgent to him than she had proved to any one, save to the Laird and her old father, in the whole course of her life; far more so than she had yet shown herself to admired Bride Fielding; and it was certain that Captain Francie appreciated her kindness, for he sighed and laughed to her only, he merely talked and smiled somewhat to the rest of the world.

Captain Francie was doomed to exercise a fascination over his associates; for although Silvercraigs in a degree got used to the clog on his pleasures, the French prisoner had become the Mordecai at Bride

Fielding's gate. Morning and evening, at their constrained meals, and in the freedom of the fields, he seemed never out of sight and sound. His simple, courteous salutation, his quiet glance, provoked her, until she believed she hated his haunting presence. After breakfast, when the Lady and her Mays were busy, he surprised them to tell Mrs. Leslie that he was setting out for Sillarton Moss, and would not be back before sunset, glancing as he spoke at the blue sky, and announcing his solitary expedition with as much eagerness as if he had been a light-hearted schoolboy, starting to join half-a-dozen playfellows as happy and heedless as himself, expressing as sincere gratitude for the bottle of milk and the doubled-up scones with which Mrs. Leslie stuffed his pockets, as if they had consisted of cogniac and an omelette. In the afternoon, when it was Miss Fielding's pleasure to summon Silvercraigs to tea, she met only Captain Francie, weighed down with spoil, fragments of petrified wood, curious marsh blossoms of solitary kinds, or carefully carried plovers' eggs, with Flo nestled close to him, one silky ear drawn through his fingers. And tea was scarcely finished when she heard his light step overhead, examining and arranging his treasures. Then at night, when 'the horse and the kye' engrossed the rest of the community, and the parlour was left to one lonely occupant, Bride peeped out to make a final envious discovery of Captain Francie pacing up and down the yard, lending an observant eye to the cutting grass

or the milk-pails conveyed past him, pur-purring to Katie Drysdale's cat, catching a stray chicken, and demurely depositing it in the hen-roost, stopping short and listening to the distant peal of Silverton bells, warning the French prisoners to their lodgings, soon lost in the perpetual, hushed song of the burn, humming himself, as he resumed his walk, unknown airs, something opposed, no doubt, to the 'Battle of the Nile,' and the 'Garb of Old Gaul,' which even at Silvercraigs had eclipsed, for the hour, 'Scots, wha hae,' and 'Johnny Cope.' Now, it was the swell of the 'Marseillaise,' and again—would that they had always been blended—the rising, falling, wild melodies, with which the steeps and hollows of the caverns might have resounded, which had died away by the sluggish canals of Holland and the swampy rice-fields of Carolina. Elspie, issuing from the byre with a rush-fed lamp of Katie Drysdale's in one hand, and her stool and milk measure (her leglan and bowie) in the other, stumbled unexpectedly on Captain Francie, and, in spite of a gradual, growing good-will to the Frenchman, unable to trust him entirely, or to forget the savage designs liberally attributed to him at first, dropped her several articles with a formidable clatter, a 'Mercy me! Captain Francie,' and a shriller 'Whar are you, Sandy?' As causeless and fruitless as young Sweethope's suspicions was Saunders' dissatisfaction when, following fast upon the scene of action, he witnessed Captain Francie gallantly picking up the scattered

property, and Elspie, self-reproved for her panic, and smitten with admiration, bobbing a succession of curtsies, and 'Thanks to you, sirs.'

Captain Francie's reverie was broken—his lip was curving in a mirthful smile, whose inherent tinge of melancholy Bride was not near enough to recognise. When he resumed his voluntary march it was in double quick time; and he now sang quite audibly a gay faubourg air, still strangely it flowed in French syllables on British ground—

'Marlbrouc se va-t-en guerre.'

Centuries hence Jacques Bonhomme may thus bring up his embalmed memories of the Iron Duke. The measure changed a third time, and, strangely enough, little as Captain Francie had appeared to profit by what were really the musical evenings at Silvercraigs, he executed 'Eveleen's Bower,' and 'Kate of Coleraine,' as Elspie and Sandy could vouch, plain as print, from beginning to end, though soft and low, no doubt because he was taking a liberty in stealing the young lady's tunes, and at the first note Miss Fielding would retire precipitately, not to shame his modesty.

Of a Sabbath many of the French prisoners, although they were Roman Catholics, attended the parish church of Silverton, and listened composedly to the weekly prayers offered up for the arms of their foes and the downfall of Popery, not much to the edification of Silvercraigs, who complained privately, with pettishness, that it was hard not to get

peace on the very Sabbath day for a set of land-loupers—what business had they in a Scotch kirk? they were not so kirk-greedy across the Channel. Whatever the motive of their company and the profit they derived, they behaved with general propriety; but amidst the occasional changing postures and wondering looks, Bride could with a flash of the eye select Captain Francie by his attitude of attention. Public worship over, when Bride was still tempted to weary trying to be good, and slipped into the garden, or with elaborate care folded up and put aside her pelisse, between her studies of the high-flown periods of Hervey, the quaint, pithy earnestness of Boston, the solemn plainness of Willison, so much relished by the Lady, and even approved after his fashion by the Laird—she could not shut out a perception of Captain Francie stretched beneath the nearest ash-tree, with his book on the grass beside him. Many a dream Captain Francie commanded at his post, many a phantom, irrespective of his lineage, of errors and misfortunes, of a king's tyranny or a subject's misery—periods more venerable, proportions infinitely grander. He lay beneath the ash-trees of Silvercraigs, in the centre of simple rural life, but he saw skies sunnier than those of France, landscapes bolder and more beautiful than her champaigns, with their mulberry-trees and vine slopes, their white farmhouses, and grey chateaux, and rude peasant shrines—their populous, prosperous towns, and broad, rapid, thronged rivers, fairer than

green Erin, with her beetling northern rocks and shelving southern bays; more picturesque than this romantic Scotland—lands where 'the waste howling wilderness, the olive 'dropping fatness,' the stately palm by the precious ancestral well, were features of the scene. He encountered the comely Hebrew lad Joseph, the child dreaming his dream among his father's sheaves and flocks, the betrayed boy captive in the hands of the Ishmaelites, the falsely accused servant, the faithful interpreter to the shivering chief baker, the prophet-teacher to the mighty Pharaoh, the governor of great Egypt speaking to haggard, toilworn, wayfaring men—'Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life.' He met with David, the anointed king, his early laurels crumbled into ashes, the heart of his brother Jonathan silent in death—the young love of the daughter of Saul grown cold—the prodigal son's standard unfurled—'flying' once more, 'like a partridge on the mountains,' uttering the cry, 'Let Shimei alone, and let him curse, for the Lord hath bidden him.' He worshipped him whose houseless feet stood before Pilate's judgment-seat, and whose bound hands, once laid on the heads of little children, were at last nailed to the tree, and stretched out over a world, an Almighty refuge and guard.

From his first arrival, poor Archie Buchan, who was a privileged guest at Silvercraigs, in spite of shyness and moodiness, took a peculiar interest in

Captain Francie; he watched him pertinaciously and intently; he did not despise him from the day when, to the great excitement of his pet Flora, he brought in a weasel, its teeth wellnigh through his hand. The electric spark that kindled the secret sympathy into actual acquaintance was, as usual, slight and sudden. In his powers of observation, and his friendly gossip with Mrs. Leslie, a benevolent impulse seized upon Captain Francie. His old *maître d'armes* had just such an invalided leg, crushed by a gun-carriage, and he had recovered the partial use of the member by a system of cure which he could not pretend to remember, but he thought he could construct a facsimile of one of the mechanical modes of relief. He set to work with the despatch of an amateur, and found the model in his mind, a stiff bit of material manufacture. He sawed, hammered, planed, stood and meditated, made sections of the article, walked into the house to his sleeping-closet, to rummage for hints to memory amongst its multifarious stores, instituted polite petitions for additional nails and glue, and after sundry fits of pensive doubt, suddenly pulled to pieces all he had accomplished, set to work again, whistled, talked nonsense to Flo, and at last appeared triumphantly with the completed result of so much reflection and skill. Archie very nearly tossed it contemptuously into the water, but he could not resist the kind, brightening face watching him anxiously, accepted the gift gruffly, and that very afternoon he limped home in search of his finest flies,

fitted up his rod and line, and sending these treasures to the custody of untried hands, bade Captain Francie try his luck in the Pedlar's-pool; and Captain Francie, buckling the basket on his shoulders, landed a score of trout, and presented them to broil for Archie's supper.

From that day's interchange of good deeds there arose the dawning of an understanding and liking between Captain Francie and the son of his host's tenant and friend. Archie Buchan's solace and recreation in occupying himself with Captain Francie's engagements and amusements developed rapidly, brought him every day to Silvercraigs, and in spite of Archie's listlessness and sourness was soon undisguised and paramount.

Archie Buchan of the Shaw was not 'mending,' would never 'mend,' suffering was his portion; a young man's strength, his glory, was taken from him. Darker and darker the cloud sank over him, burning envy and chill distrust did their work under the outward and stubborn stolidity, until he suspected the very mother who bore him of weariness of his needs and indifference to his fate.

'I am a drag upon you, mother—a man grown a bairn again on your hands—I wish I were out of your gate, never to plague you more,' he said to her, as he reluctantly submitted to her attentions.

'Na, whisht! Archie, lad; you ken it is a pleasure to me to wait upon you,' answered the authoritative, impatient woman, softly; but the healthy,

happy children at the Shaw, only sobered by Archie's misfortune, might have seen the mother wring her hands as she stood in the doorway when the stars looked down on her silent meditations.

There was an affinity between Archie Buchan of the Shaw and Captain Francie—the two young men whose careers were both at a stand, and whom Providence had brought to dwell in the same primitive country-side. The new association was a special boon to the pining man—it was even a benefit to his diseased body. Silvercraigs could not find it in his heart to find fault with the intimate intercourse of the young men thrown together so strangely and linked by misfortune. Even Bride Fielding was a shade less haughty to Captain Francie, when poor Archie Buchan of the Shaw constituted himself his patron. As for the Lady, it was whispered that her earliest white rose was seen in the Frenchman's buttonhole, and he had shown himself too honest and sagacious a man to have plucked it of his own accord, as he had possessed himself of Miss Fielding's tunes.

Captain Francie was no talker for his own benefit, but to Archie Buchan he was an encyclopædia of rare information, dispensed with spirit when the recipient was spurred on by the close encounter of wits—what he styled a *tête-à-tête*, and Archie a two-handed crack. The addition to Captain Francie's original education, while he had of necessity dropped the accompanying field-sports, had naturally expanded

and flourished on French soil into a keen taste for natural history, a pure, personal inclination to animal and vegetable physiology. In these pursuits, much more than in merely literary attainments, Archie Buchan could follow at a distance, although he was still suspicious that there must be a bee in Captain Francie's *bonnet de police* when he stripped off the green flesh from a leaf, and descanted enthusiastically on the beauty of the skeleton structure. Captain Francie could abundantly satisfy rural curiosity through his passing experience of the cultivation and products of red sandy rye fields won from the forest, canal-watered pastures, vineyards bordered by the cork-tree and the ilex. He could give piquant details of society as it existed in many a provincial miniature Paris, with its *Vive la bagatelle*, its lingering mannerism, its modern clubs, its lord of the manor—a foreign Silvercraigs—a stately remnant of the old *régime*—its maire, a fiery republican tradesman—an excrescence of the modern Jacobinism just evanishing in blood and fire, wrath and dismay—its domestic ties, generally so easy and often so gracious in tone and shape, where politeness smoothed many a difficulty, and old age was above all honoured and honourable, but under which there lay a transparent shallowness and frequently even an inveterate deceit, which no man matured in deeper, sounder regions could abide.

Captain Francie could have brought finer wares from his storehouse—long musings, patient, lonely

struggles, a wonderful amount of mental discipline, and ripe, sweet wisdom, in the bodily flush of his manhood, but Captain Francie, with innate delicacy, locked his best possessions in his own bosom.

The great contest then waging on the battle-fields of Europe possessed the public mind, and created in remotest quarters and most apathetic or volatile natures, a glow of warlike ardour; and clownish young farmers, smart clerks, men of high station and illustrious name, quitted their posts to serve as volunteers, or to beat up the requisite number of recruits to procure ensigncies, in order to share the hardships and dangers of the army in active service abroad.

Who could tell what stern dreams of the wars yeoman-bred Archie Buchan had once entertained along with softer influences? He thirsted still, like qualified men, for tales of the watch-fires and the drawn lines, from the thunder of the charge to the bugle's vain note of recall. Captain Francie had bought this knowledge, too, in the profession begun and ended, the comrades known and parted from him by sea and land, and yet broader distinctions; but here there was a fetter on his tongue, a shadow on his blue eye, and he would bend his head and busy himself with specimen or tool, and change the subject if he could, or move away if he could not. It was not that his failure was too sore a point, time enough had fled to enable him to contemplate his shattered fortunes calmly; but other scales had

fallen from his eyes—the great achievements, and still more magnificent prospects which had glowed on his wild youthful imagination had lost their false light and shrunk to their real weight—the very hero he had worshipped, who had tempted him beyond his power of resistance—alas! alas! that noble head with its vast conceptions, that steadfast arm with its truncheon of command, were set on feet of clay—mental greatness allied to moral petrifaction or distortion, and not a unique spectacle in the course of ages.

But Captain Francie was a Frenchman by adoption, and although he would never again fight in the army of aggression, he would have shed the last drop of his blood for his chief.

'Bien dit-on qu'il nous ait nui,
Le peuple encore le révére,
Oui, le révére.
Parlez-nous de lui, grand'mère,
Parlez-nous de lui.'

Let convulsion follow convulsion, and republic upon republic have their brief stand on the ashes of monarchy. A Celt is loyal to the last provocation, whether to the Corsican Buonaparte or to Charlemagne—to the *Grand Monarque,* the princely patron of art and science, the tyrant of the Huguenots—to those poor slaves of passion, libels on monarchs and men, Louis Quinze and Charles IX.—to those weaklings, wearing (the one mentally, the other physically) the sacred shields of martyr's crowns, Louis XIII. and Louis

XVI.—to the renouncer of his faith, the lover of Gabrielle d'Estrées, yet the largest and most generous of the erring hearts mouldering in the vaults of St. Denis, Henri Quatre—to the giant mould of Henry II. —to the gallantry and prowess of Francis I., fatally exerted to eclipse the rising star of the French Reformation—to the wily gossip, who rejected the invention of Gütenberg and Koster, the fruit of whose regard for law and justice proved the French acorns —to the false coiner, Philip, and his cursed and short-lived posterity—to wise Philip Augustus, deserter of his princely ally, repudiator of his wedded wife—to the more miserable Robert, victim of papal hate and vengeance—to the first wearer of the fleur-de-lys, then an iris purple as the tufted violet, dutiful son of Blanche of Castile, faithful husband of Marguerite of Provence, last chivalrous crusader, spurner of Rome's lure, Sicily, upright mediator between English Henry and his turbulent barons—Louis IX. —in spite of the odour of sanctity, in the dim and distant light of those ancient good deeds, most pure-minded, noble-hearted Christian soldier and gentleman.

Those French prisoners took work when they could obtain it. Captain Francie was engaged with some accounts and plans intrusted to him by good-natured, pawky, long-sighted Mr. Lindesay, who was the reverse of Mr. Halliburton, being very plain, very cautious; a modest man, in snuff-brown coat, with rosy cheeks, who slid into people's good graces,

and subdued them by his canniness; a wily man, but not unkindly, and certainly not unprosperous; a weaker Baillie Macwheeble, likely enough to leave a snug inheritance and more aspiring heirs. Dr. Fowler, whose cure was peculiarly the higher and middle classes, because, perhaps, he felt, good man, that he was not true enough or magnanimous enough to overleap, except in almsgiving, the gulf which separated him from the lower class, but who notably fulfilled the apostle's injunction—'Be ye hospitable to strangers,' in a little intercourse with Captain Francie, had done him the friendly turn of recommending him to Mr. Lindesay.

But, however engaged, Captain Francie spent as little time as possible a hanger-on and nuisance in the Silvercraigs parlour and drawing-room; he never even lingered when Bride Fielding was playing 'Planxty Connor,' and 'The Young May Moon is Beaming,' in the long leisure of the twilight, to the Laird. He contrived an incredible increase of light and space in his bed-closet, he worked in an empty shed in the yard, or he sauntered half the length of the loan, and leant against the trunk of a saugh, or threw himself at its roots, in his intervals of inactivity and repose.

CHAPTER XI.

'THE YOUNG FOLK.'

HE 'bear' was not yet in the 'brair' nor the 'hay' in the stack, and along the sequestered field-paths, as in the drowsy market-place of Silverton, lounging, dark-visaged men had grown familiar to the townsfolks. Maiden ladies ceased to dwell in mortal terror, though they continued to inveigh against the influx of vice; middle-aged gentlemen gradually yielded to an inclination to cultivate an intimacy with the well-bred men of the world grafted among them; the girls of Silverton, particularly, grew very charitable to the young, handsome, agreeable members of the band, and, rather to the disparagement of older admirers, got up much innocent enthusiasm, and fancied any little lass behind her companions who had not a secret favourite among the poor French prisoners.

There was to be a girls' party in Silverton, and Miss Fielding was one of the invited guests. Bride was very popular about Silverton; above all, in the farm-houses, or in those families in the town where her

presence was reckoned a condescension, which the affable, generous Irish girl, never dreamt of doling out or paring down; they were free to her countenance, grace, and sweetness, as they were to the grass and the flowers; and really Bride thought a party of the dullest sort, a meeting of Mrs. Leslie's plainest, quietest friends, a boon.

With few or no books, little fancy-work, no music beyond well-conned songs and national airs, active minds left idle and almost vacant, and even cherished, delicately-reared bodies, exposed at stated times to long tasks of heavy household work, few cordial homes of that generation were not in certain lights toilsome and tedious.

Bride Fielding was a lady and a stranger, and so the most petted girl in the neighbourhood; yet such was the standard of homely industry to which she felt bound in honour to approach, that she had often practised spinning at Elspie's allotted cuts of yarn, until her arms were ready to fall with fatigue; or the travelling tailor arrived on his rounds, and shaped for the whole womankind of Silvercraigs, Bride and Mrs. Leslie included, long, stiff seams, which blistered their fingers, and sent stitches into their sides and backs. Of a morning Bride would try to help to churn the butter, and press out the whey from the cheese-curd; and when, aching all over, she changed her morning-gown for nominal relaxation and entertainment, she had only the quiet parlour, with a change of occupation in the shape of

hemming or knitting, and the seasoning (given or withheld) of Mrs. Leslie's grave, limited talk, Silvercraigs' rough banter, and Captain Francie's strange, chill, foreign polish. No wonder if Bride tripped often to their end of the loan to discern, like Sister Anne, whether there was 'any one coming yet.'

Yes, Bride was very glad to get an invitation from the most unpropitious quarter, and have an undeniable call to put on one of her spotless white gowns, and set out on a mile or two's walk or ride—at least to find a change of scene, and be able to sit openly with her hands in her lap, and her mind enlivened by having her acquaintances' toilets to inspect and criticise.

This party was celebrated within the confined money-making precincts of the great, substantial, long-established Silverton baker, who dealt with Silvercraigs for his grain, and was one of the humbler friends of the family. Bride had been familiar with the hot back-parlour since her arrival in Scotland, and had waxed on easy terms with Magdalene, Nancy, and Lizzie Pringle, the Baker's daughters.

The Pringles, respectable, wealthy, social people, indulged in very frequent festivities—Christmas suppers, summer strawberry treats, solemn state assemblies of matrons, which Mrs. Leslie and Mrs. Fowler sometimes honoured with their dress caps, and happy gatherings of young folk; and Magdalene Pringle was about to marry a corn-merchant in

extensive trade, and Nancy was supposed to be engaged to Mr. Halliburton's youngest clerk.

To-night the company consisted of Miss Fielding, Jean Blamire, the Rollos of Wellfield, with their hobbledehoy brothers, Magdalene Pringle's small, sharp, shrewd, consequential Andrew Herriot, Nancy's long, shy Willie Raeburn, and Miss Fielding's stately young Sweethope.

It is to be wished that we could have introduced you veritably into the circle, with the door open into the shop (of which nobody was ashamed), that the boy serving the evening customers might be prudently overlooked, and in a ravelled affair of the nick-sticks might easily appeal in his turn to wiry, politic Baker Pringle, or to Mrs. Pringle, a short, square woman, with close-shut mouth and high puckered forehead, in brilliant top-knots, and a Water of the Nile silk gown, and notoriously despotic and ambitious, so that the Baker, an oracle abroad, wisely succumbed at home.

If you would have condescended, it might, for various reasons, have benefited you to have stood among the yeomen or burgher forefathers of the middle classes one or two generations back, so simple they were in their amusements, so childish, yet so jovial. These big young men, with their cut-away, brass-buttoned coats, burnished faces, and tangled hair, brushed up into 'tops,' had concluded a day's bracing exercise and manly labour. The girls, too, had each quitted some serious piece of work, demanding both skill

and endurance. Jean Blamire had risen at five o'clock of the early summer morning to complete the dress she had in hand, that she might go to the Pringles to-night; Nancy Pringle had swept and decorated the parlour, while Magdalene presided over the maids, and lent valuable aid, and all the finishing touches, to the dinner cooked for the family and journeymen; and even Miss Fielding had been three hours exposed to the heat of the sun in a voluntary weeding in the Silvercraigs garden; and neither girls nor young men had, generally speaking, home engagements for their evenings besides the ever-rotating wheels and perennial teams, or a stroll in the gloaming, the horse-suppering, or a game at quoits with the ploughmen, the occasional stirring study of a newspaper, or the drowsy perusal of an antiquated, pedantic book.

They played at forfeits as blithely as so many children, the Baker guarding the valueless articles carefully concealed under one of the fine table-napkins which so often traversed the town, over salvers, with dainty purchases, seeking modest obscurity—a cake of shortbread, an apple-tart, a few pounds of diet-cake. The room rang with laughter when young Sweethope won back his gaudy red-and-yellow silk handkerchief, by consenting (in the dark) to place Miss Fielding in a glass-case, and hang her over the Sweethope chimney-piece. They had no idea of rudeness in the broad mention of names before the parties concerned. They told Bride

Fielding, flushing and laughing with her old roguish beauty, to reclaim her long muslin glove, by kissing the four corners of the room, to three of which Andrew Herriot and the Rollos darted, and—no, not young Sweethope; he would fain have saved her from the mere make-believe of blowing the kisses to the grinning, reddening young men, as another true lover (didst thou remember, Bride?) from a more serious ordeal in that sad, sad, long ago. And, well! it is not to be guessed how he would have looked and acted, or how the whole set would have stood aghast had one of these acquaintances, or a thorough stranger, led out Miss Fielding to a waltz or polka. As for Magdalene Pringle, she put her hand on Andrew Herriot's arm, as her property, without the least demur, and the whispering and laughing which passed between the two, though intended for their peculiar delectation, was not necessarily concealed from the sight and sound of the others. When they were very noisy, Mrs. Pringle bade them be more genteel; told them there was a medium in everything; asked Jean Blamire what Miss Anne would have thought; warned them that they would be heard at the Cross. All her hints had less effect than Mrs. Leslie's frank 'Bairns, make less din.'

They sat down afresh and commenced a course, not of riddles, but of proverbs—some coarse, some weak, some full of bygone sap under their hoary vernacular—its strong, sonorous accents, like the

sagacious lips, the keen eyes, the broad brows which the blue bonnet once shaded. Most Scotch people, of all degrees, used Scotch then, more or less; none affected not to understand it, though comparatively few were fit to judge how far it exceeded the English tongue in richness and power. It would have been equally fantastic, or a proof of pitiable ignorance and incapacity, not to have proved well stored with these proverbs, the invested wit and wisdom of the agricultural population, and abounding in rural bends and shades. With decorum and state, Mrs. Pringle pinched her cuff, and started the quotations with the universal axiom, 'A rowin stane gathers no fug;' but the chief point of the play consisted in clever hits and allusions, or in catching up and handing round continuous appropriate advice. Jocosely the young folk smiled to each other when Jean Blamire stated, with a grave air of conviction, 'Mim-moued maidens stand long at the mill;' Nancy Pringle followed with 'A bird in the hand's worth twa in the bush;' then Bride Fielding, labouring to accomplish verbal connexion, broke the meaning in 'Ilka crow thinks its own bird whitest;' while Patrick Home, unable to prolong similarity either of sound or sense, blurted out his own secret discomfiture in 'Ae man can lead a horse to the water, but ten cannot make him drink.'

When the game was concluded, and the young men and girls conversed together, there was a brother-and-sister tone of frankness and kindness in their badinage and talk—in the very songs they sang,

the songs which everybody knew and everybody admired or disparaged simply and freely. 'Come, give us "Hark! sing Tally-ho,"' cries an embryo fox-hunter. 'Sing that a-field,' protests another; 'let us have "Tullochgorum."' 'Oh, if you please, Miss Fielding, try "Sweet Woodlands."' 'Tut, goodwife, begging Miss Fielding's pardon, it is not fit to hold the candle to "Puirtith Cauld," or "The Laird of Cockpen."' '"The Laird of Cockpen" is just a haver,' scouts Mrs. Pringle. Ah! Mrs. Pringle, if you had known that the archest of Scotch ditties was written by thoughtful, high-bred Caroline Baroness Nairn! And art thou aware, oh English reader, that 'Puirtith Cauld' was the plaintive lament of a Cumberland maiden; and to a bishop of thy Church we sober Scotch owe our 'Tullochgorum?'

When the huge tray of good things was placed on the round table, no one judged the Baker's long, solemn, polemical grace out of place.

Miss Fielding was sitting a little apart, half concealed by a sweet-pot which Nancy Pringle had stuffed with branches of lilac and an underwood of gay tulips. Bride's white dress was picked out by what was called a breast-knot. Alas for her! it should have been a gay cockade, and it was but a badge of black riband; yet Jean Blamire's old dove-coloured tabinet, a union of two of her aunts' former 'best dresses,' was not nearly so becoming, only Jean was a handsome woman—a queen, in her tall, rounded figure, and fair, pale beauty. Jean was within hear-

ing of Miss Fielding while she chatted to Lizzie Pringle — stout, freckled, sandy-haired, ordinary-looking, always fond of gossip, confident and heedless as commonplace people prove themselves.

Lizzie was relating to Jean Blamire that there had been a chance of the party's being increased by the addition of one of the French prisoners—the officer who lodged with Lizzie's aunt and uncle. Her father and mother had been persuaded to allow Lizzie to invite him, but a previous engagement prevented his appearance. Lizzie lamented their loss feelingly: 'I would rather have wanted any two of the others,—these gowks of Rollos. I meet him sometimes at aunty's, and he is the finest lad you ever saw—not contradictory, like Andrew Herriot, as complimentary as if he were a duke. And he is no trouble; he can make his own coffee, and boil it, as if he were a woman.'

'Miss Fielding,' said Jean Blamire, turning abruptly to her friend when Lizzie Pringle proceeded to attend to some other member of the company, and repeat her unavailing regrets, 'and what have you made of your grand French soldier out at Silvercraigs?'

'Nothing, Jean,' answered Bride, briefly, tearing a tulip-leaf.

'But, Miss Fielding, you are ill to please; you ken you'll not have a gift of Sweethope—a gude man like Pate Home sighing out his breath there for your sake.'

'It is very like it,' Bride commented, ironically.

'He is growing bigger and bigger every day; Silvercraigs says he is like a house-side, he has to bend his head already to get out of the door at Silvercraigs, and to present his shoulder to pass through the wicket-gate. I'm not hard to please; I'm like you, and Lizzie Pringle, and other people.'

'Like Lizzie, may be, droll as it sounds,' Jean meditated aloud; 'and you have not both fathers and mothers either, but you are each her own mistress; and you have neither of you aunties, or you don't dwell with them—that makes a great difference.'

Bride looked up in Jean's face, with its flitting lights and shades—'But I have not a sister, Jean.'

'Indeed, no! or you would not have been so much thought of, Miss Fielding. I'm sure, nobody ever thwarts you. I could wager my fur tippet that you've got round this landless, houseless, foreign fellow, and he'll be running your errands, and forgathering with you in the spence, and the yard, and the garden, and you'll be breaking his heart as well as keeping fast his body—poor chap! poor chap!'

'He never looks at me, Jean; and I wonder to hear you,' exclaimed Bride, indignantly, first red and then white—that ominous, unnatural succession of the lily to the rose. 'Men must face danger, run risks, and bear misfortune. What are they created for? We've braver soldiers across the seas, worse off than he. Jean, he's an old woman, too, for all his beard, or a priest, or a village doctor. He is as happy as the day is long, with his dog and his

withered plants. Poor Archie Buchan of the Shaw is racked with pain, and too much the man to play himself with pictures and toys. I wonder at you, Jean Blamire.'

Jean raised her eyes, and looked for a moment ruefully into Bride's true face, and then laughed.

'I cannot help myself, Miss Fielding, I'm wae for the gallant lads, they are bonnie to my eyes, most of them; and they have all the girls of Silverton on their side. They may be Papists and sinners—the worst is their own—so was Prince Charlie. They may have done us wrong before they saw our town, at their general's command; I forgive them freely. Maybe I'll marry one of them. Eh! Miss Fielding, what would Miss Anne and Miss Hislop say to that? For you, Miss Fielding—for, as good as you are, I think you're haughty—casting laith here and casting laith there! Patrick Home, big, and Captain Francie, small! You Irish ladies must be saucy; but take care! though you are bonnie and well-liked—mind the "wood" and the "crooked stick" at e'en.'

Poor Bride was again put down. 'I don't want a man,' she said, restlessly; 'it is not right to speak so much about men, as if we thought of nothing else. Captain Francie is but a French prisoner, and the Laird's guest. What should we know about him? He may have a wife or a love already in France, for us.'

'Na, now, Miss Fielding, when do old women and priests set up wives?'

'I would not leave my own country,' continued Bride, professing not to heed her, 'I would not forsake my own people to hearken for ever to a strange tongue, to eat all kinds of mixtures of fish, flesh, and vegetables—no, not though a man begged me on his knees. And, for Patrick Home of Sweethope,' she added, recovering her spirits,—'for big Patrick Home, with his father in his elbow-chair, and his mother in her thick cap, with her rich cakes, and her "My Pate," and his old house, and his new, he may wait till he is grey before I think on him—and I don't believe he'll be the fool. I have all the same as taken a vow to be an old maid; and so I may remain in Scotland, and take care of Silvercraigs, and Mrs. Leslie, when they grow what you call "frail," since they have no children of their own.'

'As long as you have them, Miss Fielding.'

'You may well say so to me, Jean,' Bride replied, with quick sadness; 'but surely I will not be left the very last.'

'I mean,' Jean Blamire moralized, in her half-sombre, half-humorous vein, 'that it must be a thankless work to have nought to do but to look after oneself all one's days. Better take kindly to a motherless bairn or lonely old man; though doubtless the first might grow up to doubt and distrust you, refuse to do your bidding, and cast-up that you were not a drop's blood to her; and the heir of the last

might drive you from his dying bed lest you should creep into a corner of the will, and succeed to the worm-eaten chests of drawers, or the kists with the yellow napery.'

The shop bell rang, Mrs. Pringle peered past her guests. It was Elspie from Silvercraigs, for the purpose of walking home with Miss Fielding. Mrs. Leslie was particular, too particular, many people held, but Bride did not object to be thus looked after and cared for, and rising at once, sedately refused Mrs. Pringle's proffer of another escort—'One of the young lads, any of them, would be glad of a turn along the loan; it would be a breath of country air to Andrew Herriot or Willie Raeburn, or the Wellfield lasses would wait a wee until one of their brothers convoyed her to Silvercraigs, or young Sweethope—it was just so far on his road.' But no, Bride persisted Elspie was more than enough, she would not be frightened to go alone, and Elspie had been sent into the town with the express intention of bearing her company. So with a friendly good night, and a careful, pleasant assurance that she had spent a happy evening, Bride departed.

Young Sweethope, whose attendance she had forbidden, both generally and individually, durst not directly gainsay her. For five minutes he sustained the storm of banter that attacked him on all sides when Miss Fielding had withdrawn, and then, braving their loudest jeers and laughter, he followed her,

The June evening was clear and somewhat cold, but earth and sky were full of early summer. The wind, stirring the full-leaved Saughs in the loan, breathed of balmier, mellower nights, of the longest day, and its late soft gloaming, of the broad harvest moon, and its flood of silver light. Before Bride Fielding had passed the suburb of Silverton, Patrick Home overtook her. His offence was not new, and Bride, with her Irish education, had not been wont to visit very severely his betrayal of his passion; but to-night she was pensive, and disposed to be irritated by his intrusion, and a little contemptuous of his unrequited attachment: not that she betrayed these sensations—she had the good breeding and self-respect which rendered a repulse from her the sorer to one who wished to please her, and could not effect his aim.

'It is a fine night,' ventured poor young Sweethope, as if they had not met for a period of days.

'It is a fine night,' echoed Bride, languidly.

'We've fine crops this year; if the weather continues good, we'll have the harvest by the first of September, and the cutting grass will be ready for the scythe in a month.'

'I hear everything is early,' Bride answered, with the calmness of a judge.

He attempted a more personal communication—'We were at the crows yesterday, Miss Fielding, and we harried the lums of the jackdaws at the same time. I've kept one; they're the drollest birds;

and if you like I'll teach him to fetch and carry for you like a water dog.'

'Thank you; we've so many living creatures at Silvercraigs that we can scarcely admit of an accession; but the Frenchman, Captain Francie, is wild about them—all kinds besides his plants; perhaps he does not mind whether they fly or creep. If you don't dislike the trouble of fetching over the bird, I dare say he'll be much obliged to you, Mr. Home.'

Having ingeniously accomplished this transfer, Bride loitered and looked along the road to Sweethope—'We're at home,' she said, with her pleasant, womanly composure, which he felt to be so charming, while it galled him, he could not tell why, and effectually held him at bay. 'It is too late to ask you up to Silvercraigs; good night, Mr. Home.'

He made a last despairing struggle against her cruel hard-heartedness—a whispered, earnest remonstrance and complaint—'I've hardly had a word with you to-night, Miss Fielding; you spoke to everybody but me.' She vouchsafed no answer. He sighed, and only grasped at prolonging the interview a moment longer—'You'll come over soon to speer for my mother, Miss Fielding; she's wearying to see you.'

'She's very kind; you are all kind; I'll come; but we are very busy at Silvercraigs.'

He submitted to accept the passing clasp of the gloved fingers; he thought he did not press them in his broad palm—where would have been the use?

Miss Fielding, accessible as she was not frightened to render herself, might have resented the liberty.

He moved off a few paces, turned, and stood watching Bride and Elspie to the end of the loan, his heart throbbing after he had lost the sound of their footsteps. He could see as far as the roof of the house, and the stacks in the yard behind; and as Bride approached the gate, a hairy ball flew yelping across her path, and a man's figure emerged from the shadow to recal the unexpected assailant. Young Sweethope started, knit his brows, and clenched his hand, but he might have saved himself then the root of bitterness which he strove in vain to digest for many a day.

Captain Francie touched his cap very distantly, and gave all his words to faulty Flora, scolding her in gentle, caressing, jesting phrase—'*Fi, fi, donc!* Flo; thou art but a *bête, ma mie. Ouf! chut! chut!*' as if, in spite of his courtesy, he would rather overlook Miss Fielding's little alarm, than raise his voice and cause the helpless creature now leaping on him in fond, fawning submission to cower at his altered tone.

And Bride's face crimsoned resentfully, and even after she had entered the house and retired to her own little room, she walked up and down, passionately proclaiming—What did she care for a poverty-stricken, broken-spirited prisoner, a mercenary soldier linked with a false foreign race? And she tried to concentrate against the vanquished soldiers all the

railing abuse she had ever heard, ending with the assertion that they would be marched from town to town, quartered like stocks and stones on unwilling households, until peace was proclaimed and Buonaparte's army disbanded, and then they would be shipped back to France, where they had become strangers—interlopers there as here.

Till the mood changed—and Bride turned upon herself, and asked herself, was she haughty, as Jean Blamire said—had she any right to be haughty? Could she be the same Bride Fielding?—her father's, and Mrs. Blake's, and even her mother's, and Mrs. Anastasia's darling?—whom young Frank Boyle had wooed so boldly and so stubbornly, for whom he had worn St. Bridget's straw cross before all Dublin, and studied and planned and walked and ridden for weeks and months? Or had she been a deceived woman, deceived with all Dublin—flinging away her treasure, wasting her life on a fancy, as deceived women do? It was a hard, miserable question, if it did not shake her faith in his identity—this contented, cool trifler (to a woman, what is a philosopher but a trifler?)—the ambitious, warm-hearted Irishman, who drank her health as his own the first day they met—who did not sue, who claimed her, and would not be denied! Could it be? The very same—Frank Boyle and Captain Francie! Could it be?

CHAPTER XII.

BONNIE JEAN.

'BID Miss Fielding call soon, Elspie,' whispered Jean Blamire, to the stout, rosy vendor of the Silvercraigs butter and cheese; and Elspie did not neglect to deliver the message.

'Jean ought to come out and see me,' Bride asserted; for the harvest work had begun at Silvercraigs, and Bride wanted to think herself of consequence there.

But Bride did not forget her friend's request; and the very next afternoon that she felt disengaged she walked into Silverton, delighted to be intrusted with the household purchases, and the reminding the Pringles to send the great supply of harvest bread and beer.

Bride lifted the knocker at the Misses Hislops' door, and was introduced into the parlour, where Miss Anne, Miss Hislop, and Jean Blamire were all three seated. She was graciously received, and asked to stay tea—a distinction with which Bride was always affected, and which she never presumed to decline.

Miss Anne and Jean were cutting out dimity petticoats, garments of gentility which every one esteemed in those days, and Miss Anne apologized for the necessity of continuing their work. Bride had a notion that Jean was quieter and more subdued than usual, and with the famous backboard before her eyes, she herself sat as erect as possible, and played at company.

Bride wished she could have resisted watching Miss Hislop's sewing; she had often seen it before, but it never failed to strike a chill into her, and even Jean glanced at it furtively. Miss Hislop was engrossed with a long, fine white woollen wrapper, whose border she mushed into intricate scallops, and embellished with knots of white riband: she was reckoned an adept in this branch of her calling, and piqued herself on the accomplishment, and in important cases she went out in person to receive orders and take measurements. This was the sad, fantastic array of the coffin—the shroud composed, in the artificial fashion of the day, alike for both sexes and all ages. Bride Fielding wondered whether Miss Hislop slept less soundly of nights, after her shrivelled fingers had gone so nimbly about her dismal office in preparing poor old General Elphinstone's uniform for the grave, and after she had addressed her customary appeal to Miss Anne—'Miss Anne, did you ever see a bonnier, more setting shroud?' unheeding that Miss Hislop regarded her performance as a sacred duty to the dead, as well

as a species of consolation supplied to the living, for which, with other good offices, she should be suitably rewarded.

Jean Blamire was certainly fagged and dull; and when tea was over, proposed to take a little air and see Miss Fielding home, if her aunts had no objection. The old ladies granted an unusually indulgent permission, and they were no sooner out of doors than Jean broke out into a torrent of wild talk, and fluent, random remarks.

'Be quiet, Jean; people will hear you; Mrs. Leslie would not be pleased if we were noticed.' Bride was a little confounded at her volubility.

When they reached the Saughs in the loan Jean would go no farther, but would sit down and rest herself, and make the most of the 'fine night,' with the sun yet far from setting, and the society of a young woman like herself in her power, before she returned to the town and to the Misses Hislops' house—an irksome dwelling, in its musty gentility and perennial manners and seams. Bride feared Mrs. Leslie might look a dozen of times down the garden, or across the yard, to hail her tardy appearance, but depended fearlessly on the Laird and the Lady's goodwill, and agreed to rest likewise, and share Jean's leisure a little longer.

'What would you give me, Miss Fielding, if I told you a secret when we are sitting here alone?' Jean said, abruptly. 'Can you keep a secret, Miss Fielding?'

'I think I can,' Bride answered, tingling with a little curiosity, but annoyed by the doubt of her wisdom.

'What do you think it is about?'

'How should I know? Perhaps about Magdalene Pringle's marriage.'

'No, no; the Miss Hislops have promised her things before Martinmas; but there is another wedding-gown to sew before hers.'

'Who is it, Jean? I have not heard of another marriage. Is it among the gentry? Is it one of the Silverton girls? Is it Miss Arabella Marsham—the bonniest of the Marshams? But the Laird would have heard that. Is it Alison Rhind and that Robbie Halket?'

'You are quite wrong, Miss Fielding—better say yourself and young Sweethope.'

Bride in her eagerness did not swallow the bait. 'You might tell me, Jean; I would not repeat it.'

'Well, Miss Fielding, it is who—but myself!'

'What a story!' Bride's voice rose in incredulity and disappointment.

'Why not, Miss Fielding?' Jean's voice argued, mockingly.

'I'm a stranger here, after all, but I'm not a fool, and you need not try to cheat me.'

'You must aye have had a clear head, Miss Fielding, besides what I call a sweet face, a real lady's manners, and a long purse; but it is quite true; I'm telling the truth if I ever did it in my life,' and

Jean threw herself back with her arm against the tree boll.

Bride was staggered as she gazed at Jean's obstinate mouth, flushed cheeks, and sparkling eyes; but Bride stanchly combated the startling announcement. 'It is not worth your while, Jean, to laugh at me, when I don't take in your tale. At what time or place did you make up your match? What do the Miss Hislops say? Who is the man?'

'A braw lad, Miss Fielding,' said Jean, covering her face with her clasped hands, and laughing behind the screen; 'a man to the Miss Hislops' mind; a house of his own, plenty to spend and to spare. I'll be pulling caps with you before the day is done, Miss Fielding.'

Bride started up. 'I'm going away home this minute; I cannot tell what you mean to-night, Jean; you know best yourself. I will not ask another question.'

Jean composed herself. 'You are dizzy, poor Miss Fielding, but don't run off without your news; everybody's not Pate Home. Whisht! you must listen to me; I'm to be married, Miss Fielding, come a month, to douce Baillie Lindesay, with his worsted wig and his checked-linen cravat, and is not he a gallant bridegroom?'

Bride, poor child! always romantic and magnanimous on her own account, began to cry with pain and passion. 'It is a shame, Jean Blamire, it is a great shame! How dare you make such a speech to

me—or any woman, and poor Archie Buchan hanging about up yonder at the Shaw?'

Jean's flippancy fled; she clasped Bride's shoulder with a trembling hand, and besought her, 'Dinna greet! oh, dinna greet! Miss Fielding, like a bonny woman; I'm not worth greeting for, unless you greet for him; and I'll be in earnest, though my heart s' ould break.'

'Then say it is not true, Jean.'

Jean shook her head. 'It is true, Miss Fielding, it is ower true, it is fixed; I've consented, and I will not change my mind.'

'Oh! Jean, girl, were you mad? He is older than Silvercraigs, and he is a silly man to seek a young wife for his three-score years. Have you forgotten how you told me you made him duck for apples at the Pringles on your Hallowe'en, and his wig slipped down into the water, and you all laughed, and Mrs. Pringle was very angry?'

'I mind very well, Miss Fielding; but if Mr. Lindesay has a bare, glazed pow, that is, if everything came to light, and has to put on his glasses to read and reckon his accounts, he's an honest man, and, stay till you see, he'll be the best I'll have yet.'

Bride was struck dumb. The millstone into which she had suddenly penetrated was dry, hard, and cold to the Irish girl. All daily sights and sounds—the loan, now dusty at all hours; the three Saughs, drooping their light, leafy branches; the little bright-eyed squirrel, which she knew lodged

there, luxuriating in its Midsummer existence; the rustling corn, for which sickles were whetted; the Silver water singing by the busy farm-town of Silvercraigs; and the quiet streets of Silverton — everything that was real, and sound, and sweet, shrank and faded.

Bride made use of another cue. 'I did not know you were so soft-tempered and mean-spirited, Jean Blamire; I would sooner sew my fingers to the bone; I would far, far sooner, live and die a single woman.'

Jean turned her fair face and grey eyes pitilessly on her friend, while, slowly and circumstantially, with an occasional irresistible touch of humour, she detailed the circumstances under which she had yielded.

'It is easy for you, a lady, to speak; it is different for me, a poor orphan, to bear. You have never tried a penniless single woman's lot, with none belonging to you to like or to dislike you when old and infirm—at best to be beholden to the care of some glaiket lass hired by the minister of the parish, or a charitable great lady, or the chance call of some better-off friend who had known you in your young days, and you a sick, fractious woman, cankered and jealous. You see, I'm not nearly so good as I should be; I'm not patient, and I'm held down like a bairn till I'm fit to bite the tongue out of my head. Thank the Lord that you were reared in a father's house, Miss Fielding, a hame free and fond, that I have often likened to the verse in the Bible about the place

where "there is none to make you afraid." The Miss Hislops mean well, I'll maintain that, and they've fed me and clad me till I'm a woman, and more. But, Miss Fielding, you mind well the time when you did not need to say that you were welcome at a father's fireside, where your faults were like motes in the sunbeam; I beg your pardon, but when you're older you'll gather more wit and set greater store on a house of your own.

'I'm not cut out for the mantua-making, though the Miss Hislops were to name me their successor; I've no turn for gentility; you ken my mother was lowlied, and took up her head with a schoolmaster—he was not a gentleman, though he was book-learned, and never crossed her, or held up his head after she was taken from him. If he had been a stouter man, I might have had another fortune. But oh! it is dull down by, at the Miss Hislops', and I'm sore wearied, not of work, but of confinement and bondage—never a yea or a nay say, always bidden hold my tongue, and threepit I'm in the wrong; and I'm four-and-twenty, and not like to see the end of it.

'It was otherwise once on a day; but this year past sometimes I could greet till my heart was like to burst, or flyte back till Miss Anne's hair would stand on end with my thanklessness and rebellion. So I must flit before I bring sorrow on them, or shame on myself.'

'Oh, Jean! you are not so very old; and what

could put Mr. Lindesay in your way?' Bride was a little nettled, but not the less keenly aggrieved.

'Well, it was easy. I went at night with Miss Anne's second muff to bring home a pound of Gloucester cheese or a Lochfyne herring or two to their supper—they like something tasty, the old ladies, after the day's darg—and Mr. Lindesay would be locking up his office about the same hour, or in Deacon Rae's shop (that is our grocer's), talking over the burgh politics, and he was frank and crouse, and would crack a joke, and treat me to an orange or a fig. I'm sure I thought nothing about it, I was only blithe to get a laugh. But some ill bird carried a story to the Miss Hislops, and at first they were as offended as ever they could be. Miss Anne talked to me two hours on demeaning myself so far as to be spoken of with a common man's son, and a man in years himself—and me believing it fun all the time, and as if Mr. Lindesay was not a 'prentice-lad when Miss Anne came out in her maize gauze at the Silverton assembly, or as if she would have given me more quarter for carrying on with a halflin lad. I guessed the long and the short would be the withdrawal of our custom from Deacon Rae's, and it is the heaviest end of our living, for the butcher's-book of four or five women is not worth mentioning.

'But Miss Anne stepped out herself and made the markets, for I was to be trusted again at no hand.

'Then we heard of the last grand victory, and

that the loaf was up another penny, and folk feared a meal-mob, and, save the lairds and the farmers, the country would soon be fain to give up the fashions, and make their own bonnets and gowns. For, as proud a spirit as Miss Anne has, she came in one night and summoned Miss Hislop into the bedroom, and snibbed their door. In half an hour they drew back the bolt and called me in; and, Miss Fielding, Miss Hislop's een were red and swelled, and Miss Anne's face white; they had got a blow, and struggled against it in vain; and they were broken-down, poor old ladies! They reminded me that they had brought me up, and trained me to a genteel business; but they could do no more; their tochers and savings were sunk by Mr. Halliburton to eke out their income, and their furniture was sore through, and there was but the good-will of the house to leave behind them. They feared I was not fitted to earn a lady-like living, and could not keep my place, and did not aspire; so, though it was a humiliation, they had made up their minds to give me their free consent to settle in a safe, comfortable way. Miss Fielding, I was amazed, and I could not get in a word to contradict them, and I was tempted to laugh; but, lass, ere I could do aught else, Miss Anne got hold of Mr. Halliburton, and he called in upon Mr. Lindesay and speered what he meant. The Baillie, poor man, was taken aback, and confessed that he was looking out for a wife, and said he could desire nothing better than support and countenance to woo openly. Mr.

Halliburton supped with the Miss Hislops on the head of it, and promised to let Mr. Lindesay have all the business that would be too much for his clerks, and drank my health and prosperity, and was not that an honour? And was that a time to be wilful?

'I've plagued the old ladies too often; they took me from my father's dying bed, and my mother not twelve months in her grave. They were father and mother to me, and where would I have been without them? I'm not free to disobey them. My mother went her gate, and you see it was short enough; and I've to pay part of the penalty at this day. It is not the stillest that is soonest conquered. It would be a pleasant sight one's own fireside, and a pleasant sound one's own mistress.'

'Don't marry him, Jean; you cannot tell what is before you yet. Say no, this once. I will help you, Jean; let me do something for you; it will make me happy, believe me.'

But Jean's rashness and obduracy were proof against relenting. 'No, Miss Fielding, I thank you sincerely, but I will not be a burden to any friend again. You are not rich enough to keep all the idle, unhappy women in the world. Don't tell me, but you'll have need of your money, somebody will have a right to it yet. It would be an ill return for all your kindness and gentleness to render you poor. I've said long ago, men are all the same, and "better an old man's dear than a young man's drudge." But you need not take it so much to heart. It is

not your fortune that is read to you. You'll get some strapping young lad, full of hope and happiness —if it be not Sweethope—your heart's desire, my generous, bonny Miss Fielding.'

'No, Jean, no; I'll not marry anybody now; and I'll never believe in lad or lass more,' Bride protested, sadly and resentfully, pulling handfuls of moss from the low bank, and scattering it around her.

'Whisht! whisht! bairn,' Jean exclaimed, hastily rising, 'I'm bold to complain. I'm but a penniless orphan lass, a big woman that should know better, and do her endeavour to perform the part appointed to her. I'm to have grand clothes, and plenty of them; and Mr. Lindesay's flat is as full as it can hold with tea-tables, and a wardrobe of wood from the West Indies, like what is in Silvercraigs. I cannot lie down when I want behind the kirkyard dyke, and—oh! woman—we're not fit for the "narrow house" when we like. Mr. Lindesay is a worthy man, and was a good brother and uncle to his widow sister and her wild laddies—to credit that they should call me aunty, Miss Fielding. I'm better off than I deserve; I'll make a good wife, if I can. I've told you first, Miss Fielding, because we've been friends, though of different degrees. Bear me no grudge; do not hold me heartless; but keep my part, Miss Fielding, for the sake of some happy days.

'Now I'll not keep you longer, for Mrs. Leslie will be anxious; she's aye thinking of others, the Lady, and she'll be slipping down the loan to meet her

young friend, and the Laird will be wearying for his tunes from the bonnie, merry young cousin he is so fond of, and the French lad will be dowie, and young Sweethope will be looking in, and missing somebody, and every one at Silvercraigs will be ill for want of you. Good night, good night, Miss Fielding.' And Jean Blamire went her way in the radiance of her beautiful womanhood—Bride Fielding long remembering her look, and the new dress she wore—the nankin cotton gown, with its green silk cords and buttons, and the square of black lace falling down about her white pillar of a throat.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE BRIDAL EVE.

RIDE FIELDING was deeply wounded. Jean Blamíre was making a base, worldly compromise, which would rebound on poor, afflicted Archie Buchan; and somehow, Bride was certain it devolved upon her to warn him. Bride comprehended perfectly that the early announcement was for Archie as well as for herself.

Bride felt herself involved in care and responsibility, and was absent and agitated for two or three days. It increased her difficulty that she was no favourite with Archie, though she had been very good to him; there was that in his eye which always said to her, 'What right has this gay madam to avoid my Captain Francie?' Bride bore him no malice for this prejudice; nay, her voice was always very sweet to the invalid lad, her eye very soft to him, but the circumstance exaggerated the awkwardness of an explanation.

At last Bride summoned courage to dog Archie

Buchan's footsteps one morning into the Silvercraigs garden, with its thyme borders, miniature forest of white rasps, mossy fruit-trees, and seat, which Captain Francie was erecting. Bride dared not pause to take breath, for she must execute her purpose before they reached Captain Francie, planting his posts a few yards before them. So she begged Archie to look how much lavender there would be to cut, and pressed on nervously with her tidings. She had heard of an event which was about to happen in Silverton—would he not like her to tell it to him? It would perhaps surprise him—perhaps not.

'Maybe not,' Archie echoed, carelessly.

It was about a person he knew, a person they all knew—it was about a marriage.

Tell ladies' news to other folk; he did not care to hear them.

But Bride persevered, firm in the sympathy which filled her heart, only she could not help reproaching him, with faint pique on her own account, that he was more taken up with travellers' wonders.

Gowns, and courtings, and weddings! he scoffed; he was a likely man for such talk.

But he should hear her—that is, he might listen to her tale. Jean Blamire, who had not been at Silvercraigs for six weeks, was contracted, as they called it, by the Misses Hislop, to Mr. Lindesay, Baillie Lindesay, of Silverton! The old gentleman had made an offer, and Jean had let herself down to accept it. Such a talk as there would be

throughout the country—a couple with forty years between them! But there would be a marriage—there was no doubt of that—within a month or less. Certainly one of the parties had no time to lose. And Bride, with a little remorseful recollection of Jean's last request, was very scornful in her unskilful, broken communication. She might have saved herself the trouble; for before she could look Archie Buchan in the face, he turned about, and made the best of his way down the dewy path to the house, and although her heart fluttered in doubt and apprehension, she dared not follow him.

The next occasion on which Bride saw Archie Buchan, his aspect was so unchanged that it seemed foolish to feel like a criminal; for was he not instantaneously reinstated in the old solemn atmosphere with which she had earlier invested him—one foot in the grave, the other lagging wearily to the same bourne, the humours and passions of such moment to her—to him 'vanity of vanities?'

Yes, Archie called every fine day, chatted with Captain Francie, rested in the Laird's big chair, twisted traps for the winter vermin—quite as usual; and his cheek was so wan, that even the bloodless hue of despair could not blanch it whiter, his manner so cold, that sharp anguish could not find in it a single intelligible expression.

But Jean Blamire had disappointed Bride Fielding, and their rapid friendship seemed as suddenly severed. Bride had known much personal sorrow,

yet this cross magnified itself, and hung its shadow over these first brilliant, cheerful harvest days.

Jean Blamire's marriage was proclaimed to the public, including the heads of the household at Silvercraigs, and Bride had the slight panacea of exclaiming aloud: 'I have known it for a long time—a whole fortnight.'

The strange alliance for which Jean Blamire—'bonnie Jean,' the beauty of Silverton—was to barter her independence, excited the natural amount of wonder, reprobation, and ridicule; and many a tongue took up the verses of 'Come under my Plaidie,' or 'Roy's Wife,' and sang them with marked emphasis.

Silvercraigs was one of the most severe animadverters on the culprits—the honest, wilful Laird hated double-dealing and weakness. The Lady said little, as usual, and that little was mild with the mildness which is the quality of the highest, purest mind.

Bride deserted Silverton for a space, but she gleaned that douce Mr. Lindesay, cut short in his innocent little flirtation, was half exulting, half ashamed, half timid at his success, and with an exceeding admiration of Jean, was not without a little lingering dread of her wit, and Jean had not altogether learnt to spare her ancient swain.

The marriage day drew near, Jean was a bride, and Bride Fielding's anger was overcome by an irresistible desire to see Jean once more, and bid her farewell—if she should never put her foot within

that house of her own, which Jean had bought, as Bride judged, too dearly. Therefore Bride assented to the formal notice to go in and view Jean's 'things'—her wedding finery—with a little inquisitiveness and a swelling heart. She dressed herself very soberly though, almost as she would have gone to a house of mourning, in her grey bombasin, like a fresh flower bound up in a lichen. Just as she was setting out, Mrs. Leslie called her privately into her room. Bride was mute with expectation, while Mrs. Leslie took out a parcel from a deep drawer, and put it in Bride's unready hand, explaining—'See, Bride, take that from me to Jean Blamire; you must not greet her empty-handed. You may like to look at it—it is a silver tankard, made by Mr. Burns. Mr. Lindesay's supplied with spoons, and dividers, and sugar-nippers, already, but I trow he's not like to win a drinking-cup, the same as Silvercraigs, at race, or coursing-match, or as an offering from the Volunteers.' Bride praised Mrs. Leslie's kindness and liberality, and looked rather slightingly at the pretty, expensive little amethyst and emerald clasps with which she had provided herself. Mrs. Leslie still detained her; the Lady who was always so cool was the least thing flurried—a slight colour passed over her fair, full cheek, and a slight smile, dying away in a moment, showed her white, firm, even teeth. Strange that the very Lady of Silvercraigs should smile at such a token. 'I dare say you will think it droll,

Bride; I'm a fell-like person for a black foot or go-between on such an errand, and you may not like to carry it either, but I am willing to oblige the poor lad—what though I see not that it can do any good? and likewise I think I can depend on your good-will, Miss Fielding.'

After that speech from Mrs. Leslie, Bride Fielding would have undertaken anything.

'You see,' Mrs. Leslie continued, 'he could not employ Captain Francie here, or I doubt not he would have been well served. You'll get Jean Blamire alane, Bride, and you'll say cannily, from Archie Buchan, what he bade ane tell her, that he wishes her joy, and that if he had not been a cripple, he would have looked for an invitation to dance at her bridal, though he could not have hoped to leap with her gay gudeman.'

'Oh! but, Mrs. Leslie, must I say that? What end can it serve? What good will it do? Do you not wish he were in a better frame of mind?' cried Bride, in distress.

''Deed do I, my dear, but will my wishing set him right? And is it not safer that the worst should be known, and no step taken blindfold? These were the very words he delivered to me, kepping me down by the water last night, and asking me to repeat them to my Miss Fielding. We maun tell the truth, Bride; we maun aye tell the truth, at any cost.'

Bride sat down on the grass where the saughs of

the loan hid her from the house, and thought long on the ill-omened greeting, on the curious intricacies of those hearts rugged and imperturbable, with grave, stern simplicity, receiving and passing on literally, as a matter of duty and responsibility, without a shade of deceit or ridicule, the last bitter mocking words of a desperate man. Was it a solitary example? Did it suffer her to have a glimpse beneath another stout front, witnessing as woful a contrast as this frozen face and wasted body? And were we all to tell the truth at any cost?

Silverton, the little market town, with its old-fashioned, homely, sedate dignity, changed its character also in her eyes, as if it too was false and hollow, and flouted at her true heart. Once within the Misses Hislops', however, Bride found herself and her individual feelings quite borne away in the stream of preparation and animation that was filling and transmogrifying the old house.

The Misses Hislop were, according to their ideas, acting very handsomely towards their niece. Every fresh gift was so charming in their own eyes as to evoke another and yet another bounty, until Miss Anne believed that, in spite of the dear year, her purse-strings would never close again.

The parlour was hung round with Jean's 'providing,' and Bride and other guests were ushered in to inspect and admire the grandeur—the Leghorn and beaver hats, the fine bottle-green cloth riding-habit, albeit Jean was not likely to mount Mr.

Lindesay's jogging pony; the worked muslin gowns, with tight skirts and *hand-sewed* flounces; the *seeded* silk pelisses, the abundance of excellent and exquisitely-stitched underclothes—Jean might have been wedding young Sweethope, instead of the old writer Thomas Lindesay. The Misses Hislop were smothering the misalliance in the magnificence of the etceteras.

Jean moved about among her finery with sparkling eyes and white cheeks, and Bride watched her now proudly surveying her possessions, for, since the days of the Hebrew prophet, a 'bride' will 'delight' in 'her ornaments,' and Jean had spent the greater part of her life in the appreciation of such articles, and, poor soul! it was not to be supposed that she should all at once cease to value them now—now sitting down with sudden weariness, while Archie Buchan's congratulation was ringing in Bride's ears!

Jean had not taken offence at Miss Fielding's absence; was glad to see her, grateful for the gifts which she added to her store, and eager to comply with her hesitating request to accompany her down the loan once more. 'Thank you, Miss Fielding, a breath of air will do me good. I have not been out since I was a bride, and I must not be seen; but I think we can slip out by the back-door and the garden, and round by Lawrie Rogers' cruive, and nobody be a bit the wiser. The Miss Hislops will not miss me, for Mrs. Fowler is to call to see my china: they've niffered it three times.' And Jean

contrived to gain her end, and sit again with Bride Fielding under the waving, silvery saughs, where she had broken to her friend the change of state now so near at hand.

After the harvest-day's swift sweeps of cloud and dashes of bright rain, so fleeting that the reapers never once quitted their work, the evening was fine. One long pea-bloom stratum of cloud across the daffodil break of the western sky, the rest a tranquil blue; the harvest-moon in her second quarter, hanging out her lamp to light the few early sheaves of corn in the fields.

Jean Blamire was very quiet; as if the harvest night addressed her in language of its own. Any dweller in the country may have experienced the peculiar power of the harvest-moon—how it pours down on the earth, laden with golden treasures, great gushes of peace and happiness. Any interested observer of rural society may have observed, too, how the fruition of the year's labours, making the heart 'sing with joy,' is fertile in kindly association, and frank, friendly, softening influence, which, among the younger members of the population, often kindles fancy and passion, or brings to a consummation a dilatory wooing.

> 'In the spring a young man's fancy
> Lightly turns to thoughts of love,'

writes the poet; but, in the ripe and ruddy autumn, after the toils of the day, many a simple, sturdy ploughman lad, crosses 'the moor' to court his

'Nanny;' and many an independent yeoman, as he gazes proudly on his groaning wains and rising thicket of stacks, all unconsciously clenches the shy, sweet fancy which stole into his heart with the last year's corn riggs.

Jean Blamire remembered other harvest-moons, shining into more congenial hearts, and leant her arm upon Miss Fielding's knee, and complained, weakly, 'Miss Fielding, my head is dizzy, and sometimes I'm sick, sick.'

'You'll not be well, Jean,' Bride answered, commiseratingly; 'you have been sewing too hard. You should go and ask something from the doctor.'

'The doctor could do me no good. I'm like the lass in the song, Miss Fielding, "I'm no like to dee;" and I'm not fit to die, I'm not fit to die.'

'What puts dying in your head, Jean?' exclaimed Bride, in trepidation; 'and you young and strong, and going to be married this week.'

'Many a younger and stronger than me has been cut down by a stroke; and, but that I say to myself I'm not fit for it, I could wish I were dead—lying between my father and mother in Silverton kirkyard, with you and poor Archie Buchan treading softly, and looking down on the green grass growing above my light head.'

'Oh! it is wrong to speak so, it is very wrong; and it is cruel to say it to me, for you have done it yourself, and how could any one else help it?' exclaimed Bride, in involuntary selfishness.

'Nobody could help it; I blame nobody—no, not myself; and I have taken my last farewell of Silvercraigs and the Shaw; and here, Miss Fielding, on the trunk of the backmost saugh behind the biggest tree, where none but one in the secret could find them, you can read the letters of two names with a heart between them—two names for Archie and Jean, and but one heart. They are to the fore, and will last this many a year and day, though they were only written in the wrinkled leathern bark, but everything else is gone like a dream.'

Jean stopped short, for, wending up the loan, in her grey duffle-cloak and hood drawn over her white cap, with a stick to aid her progress, came Silvercraigs' crone, Katie Drysdale. Katie was so far advanced in years that she now rarely 'travelled,' as she termed it, into the town; but she was on one of her occasional peregrinations to make a personal consignment of a portion of her winter's industry. Katie was faithful and attached, but very querulous, and disposed to stretch her privileges to the utmost extent. Bride Fielding, as well as every one at Silvercraigs, was accustomed to pay her all honour, and defer to her humours.

Katie advanced, with her yellow-and-blue pinched face and bleared eyes, and was upon the young women before they could think of propitiating her favour. 'What for are you daidling at the roadside, Miss Fielding, and the Lady's hands full of hairst-wark? Miss Jean, think shame to have

no more to do a night or two before your bridal. Go hame, and keep out of folks' sight and speech. When I was a bride, brides were blate. Set a better example before Elspie and Beattie, the queans.'

'Wish me joy, Katie,' Jean adjured her, hysterically.

'I do wish you joy, Miss Jean, but I'm thinking a widow woman is an ill foot. You should have bidden at hame. And there is sma' joy to be found in this world; but you're getting a man, and you are to be busket like a countess; and that will make up for the writer carle donnert ere you see thretty; and you will forget that you were evened to Master Archie at the Shaw, in his best days—Master Archie, with his arm like the bough of an aik, and his springing step and ruddy face. I wish you muckle joy, Miss Jean.'

Katie's toothless lips parted with a spiteful smile. She had 'sorted' Miss Jean, who had forgotten one of the bairns at the Shaw.

'The scaith and the scorn,' Jean Blamire said, dryly, as she watched the slowly-retreating figure. 'Who would heed a silly old wife? But both the scaith and the scorn, Miss Fielding, are hard to bear.'

'You are not angry?' asked Bride, anxiously. 'Katie Drysdale says what she likes, and she is an old woman, and has grown cross with her age; but she means no ill, and she likes all at Silvercraigs as if they were her own, as if Silvercraigs was her very

son. I would not vex you myself, Jean, to-night, but I have a message to you, and I'm frightened to give it; and I'm frightened to hold my tongue, because Mrs. Leslie trusted me, and I would not fail her—or him. He is unreasonable in his need, as he may be, with all his sufferings, but none of us contradict him, not even the Laird. Only I am very sorry, Jean.'

'Tell me,' Jean begged, breathlessly—not angry, as Bride had foreboded—and she even heard her out, accepting the provocation with sobs and tears of sorrowful tenderness. 'I forgive him—I forgive Archie, Miss Fielding; I'll not even say he might have spared me. I'll remember him till my dying day;—there can be no harm in that, and I could not help it, though I tried. These are the last words I will get from Archie Buchan. Had he spoken them lightly, lang syne, on a harvest night like this, behind a stook or a stack, or with the trees above my head, when he had ended binding or leading, and I had stolen out from Silverton, I would have caused him cast them to the winds for a song or a kiss; but he'll never more seek song or kiss from me. Oh, Miss Fielding! I would have worked like a slave, or wanted, or lain down and died for him; but he was dogged, and would not suffer it; and I was growing old, an ill bairn, in the Miss Hislops' house.'

Warm-hearted Bride Fielding cried in company, as if her heart would break; and when Jean at last bade her farewell, clung to her with the fondness of

a child; and notwithstanding her resentful resolves never to cross Mrs. Lindesay's threshold, volunteered a host of promises to call the very first time she was in Silverton. On the next occasion when Bride saw Jean Blamire, she was passing, on Mr. Lindesay's arm, to church, walking steadily along by the side of the old writer, in the Amazon dress that best became her beauty—the beaver hat, cloth riding-habit, primrose vest, and snowy plaited frill tied up with a black silk neckerchief, while Archie Buchan hung over a pair of crutches, the last work of Captain Francie, and swung himself painfully about the yard at Silvercraigs.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE DISPATCH.

THE shocks of corn were 'fully ripened,' the tedded grass in the meadows was whitening to decay, the Lammas flood had long supplied the want of water from the dried-up springs of July, all Silvercraigs was engaged in the harvest, broadening and hastening to its completion—all, save the wights set aside from work and wages.

Even this reserve shook itself up in the general ardour. Captain Francie dabbled deeply in a clerk's duties, and merged from an ostensibly idle to a busy man—by authority. He whistled and hummed merrier measures at his evening parade, and took off his cap and proposed to lift Elspie's heaviest pail, with a harmless, audacious compliment to her yellow hair, which caused Elspie to snatch up her burden and dart into her den—the dark little dairy—there to pant and sniggle herself into composure, declaring ever and anon that Captain Francie's whole bones might thank

Sandy's being then stirring his brose in the bothy. He was crowing crouse, the French lad; for, as canny as they had held him, she would not hinder him from proving wild enough to make up to Miss Fielding herself, yet.

When Captain Francie ran up his figures, and even sketched odd draughts of steadings and farm-buildings, without the least fear of his adding cipher to his sketches and using them in an invasion, Archie Buchan proudly proffered his assistance. Like many a lad educated at a Scotch parish school, while he mouthed uncouthly the pages of an English book, Archie could have stood a few questions on Latin grammar, wrote a round, legible hand, and had a creditable knowledge of arithmetic, verging upon algebra. In the present engagement of the family out of doors, the joint performance had often the parlour for its field, when only Bride Fielding flitted about, resting occasionally at the Lady's wheel, which took up the hum from the kitchen, never silent, except for the few busy weeks at this season, or bringing in the day's ripe pears, or standing like Mrs. Leslie herself, with her half-finished knitting hanging from her white hand, regarding the leading and the stack-building, and catching enlivening snatches of sonorous gossip and merriment.

Occasionally there was a lull in the heat of harvest, an interregnum between the white corn of early fields and that, green to the last, in cold, wet localities; or the inevitable recurrence of a rainy day,

and a short, inactive period of drought to counterbalance it.

On one of those days of truce and relaxation, the Lady mounted behind her husband and paid a long-deferred neighbourly visit, prepared to exert her influence to induce Silvercraigs to return at a discreet time, before the joviality became obstreperous. For a change, Bride remained at home. Mr. and Mrs. Leslie set out early in the autumn afternoon, leaving many charges for the safe conduct of the family in their absence; and crediting that they had made ample provision for the decorum of the parlour by consigning Archie Buchan as well as Captain Francie to Miss Fielding's care.

No sooner were the broad backs of the heads of the family turned, than entire liberty succeeded judicious curb—an utter cessation of ordinary employment, with an effervescence of animal spirits, which had fairly been contemplated—a state of matters not of long continuance, but the certain temporary reaction after any amount of pressure. Elspie deserted her scouring, and tempted Saunders from the important and skilful thatching of the new stacks; her 'neighbour lass,' in delivering the weekly dole to a bluegown, commenced an endless discussion of the news of the country-side; even the herd on the lea, from his look-out in the distance, comprehended these symptoms, and prepared to 'wear in the kye' half an hour sooner than usual; only the sick man, Master Archie from the Shaw, and the

French lad, Captain Francie, who had no master and no work, laboured unheedingly at Mr. Lindesay's papers; for Miss Fielding wandered down by the Silver water, jingling her keys in a little excitement, planning a dignified fulfilment of the duties of the tea-table, with a proud wonder why Mrs. Leslie should hesitate to leave her to keep company with Captain Francie, yet glad at the same time that her hostess had been so considerate. Bride sat down by the burn-side and gathered and split handfuls of rushes, plaiting them into rice-paper-looking wicks for Katie Drysdale's cruizie; then she sauntered to the Cotton, finding Katie the centre of a thick cloud curling from the fire of sticks on the hearth, maundering to herself, toasting pease bannocks, and adding to the pungent smoke the fumes of her short pipe. Katie was in an affable, gracious humour, and crooned over the Irish lady, as her 'honey,' her 'lambie,' her 'doo.'

At last Bride recollected the bleaching-green, and an imaginary obligation to water the cloth and yarn constantly whitening on the soft grass and among the broom bushes. This watering was effected in the simplest style, by dipping a rude wooden scoop into the burn and scattering its contents liberally around. The action was monotonous and fatiguing on a bright afternoon, still hot for the season, and in spite of the cool water, it was trying for the temper. The Silver water was the haunt of patient anglers, particularly when the town's offices were

closed, and the young clerks set at liberty; and the stream marched with Sweethope as well as Silvercraigs; and Bride Fielding, when Mrs. Leslie allowed her to go down to the haugh and watch the cloth, had sometimes more assistants than the shy Scotch lady, in her philosophy, dreamt of. But today, too clear for a nibble, the burn was solitary, and Bride worked at her forgotten task till ready to resign it in sheer exhaustion and impatience. She took up the end of a web and waved it as a signal, but Elspie had just spied the exhilarating sight of a well-known pedlar's pack, travelling up the loan on the shoulders of its owner, and had forsaken Sandy to scream to the neighbour lass the welcome news, secure now of ample apology for time wasted in the glamour of Packman Jock's gaudy gownpieces, webs of smuggled silk handkerchiefs, and piles of ballads and dream books; for the mistress knew that he kept the best needles and strongest thread to be had for love or money, and she might well allow them an hour over his goods, considering how they would thank him at their seams during the long winter evenings.

If Bride had heard of Allan Ramsay's Peggy and Jenny, with their lily-white cloth, exchanging their girlish confidences amidst the 'lone green hills of Habbie's How,' or had remembered the fair, frail maiden of Falaise, on whom the fierce heart of Robert le Diable swooped down, she might have been consoled for the nature of her toil; but she would only

think, conscientiously, of the dry cloth, and, petulantly, of the steep descent to the burn, and the panting climb back with the full scoop, and, worryingly, that she could not conclude in time to infuse the tea as Mrs. Leslie did, letting the tea-pot bask on the snowy 'cheek' of the grate.

Bride was the least bit of a vixen, like most women, and, because she found herself, by her own fault, thus thwarted and beaten, she flung down the scoop on the grass, and stood sulkily staring into the water. She started to hear a footstep behind her, but she did not look round, because, instantaneously, a shadow fell across the quivering russet oat-grass and stiff reeds of the burn, and Bride's face flushed hotly to recognise the cap with its band, and the coat with its deep cuffs and epaulettes.

Captain Francie had picked up the scoop, and, planting his foot on the stepping-stone, was shooting the sparkling water over the glancing yellow cloth and wreaths of green yarn. Bride turned away without acknowledging the service, but furtively weighing the well-balanced figure and the slight smile mantling on the mouth, whose strength lay in its growing placidity, which no brown, warlike moustache could darken. There was not a word spoken between them, before Captain Francie bowed and retreated; but Bride perversely laid hold of that smile, and condemned it vehemently all the time she sat gravely at the tea-table (shivering under the shadow of their first tea-table—and yet they had been so social

and so brilliant, those old tea-tables of Blake's boarding-house); not that Captain Francie presumed on his good deed any more than on acquaintance so ancient, it had rusted into the most utter oblivion. He was talking less than usual to his friend, because Archie's powers were spent; but tea refreshed the sickly lad, and then he showed a feverish desire to detain his companion, who would fain have strolled by the water where the trout were leaping, and commanded the plantation tops, tinged with gold—the herald of the glory of the sunset—that glory which has no stain. But Captain Francie was a gentleman—a kindly as well as a chivalrous gentleman he had proved himself, in spite of all his errors; and he could linger, with his elbow resting on the square, spindle-legged table, opposite Archie, in the already dusky parlour, for a rapidly-rising row of stacks was shortening the daylight long before the fall of the year, and only a single ray of the sinking sun struck in and pierced the cupboard, with its display of china and crystal. Captain Francie did not shrug his shoulders at the delay; but, while he chatted with Archie Buchan, he occasionally gave one of those queer foreign signs which diverted Archie more than any amount of wit or wisdom. Bride prepared to forsake the pair, and to find occupation elsewhere; perhaps to rattle 'Garryowen' on the spinnet—you may be sure she would not sigh forth 'The Last Rose of Summer.'

Suddenly, to the amazement of the whole party, Silvercraigs, without Mrs. Leslie, reappeared. The

couple had only reached the town when they were assailed by the news of the last mail from the Peninsula, throbbing through many a heart, and pelted at them by eager hands. Lord Wellington was again victorious, and the excitement and exultation were as usual intense. Silvercraigs went no farther; he joined the town-council, always ready to meet, and beginning at last to rank Lord Wellington with the gallant Graham, whose name was destined to be linked for half a century with Scotch glory and with Abercromby—that elder of the Scotch Kirk who made his last bed and murmured his last prayer by the mystic Nile. The impromptu toasts and speeches over, Silvercraigs bought the last copy of the *Courant*, containing the brief bulletin and the editor's flaming comments, called forth his white mare, and posted home for its perusal—leaving the Lady to drink tea with some friend in the town, and walk home at her leisure in the twilight.

Silvercraigs strode into the parlour attended by Saunders and his brother ploughman. He was booted and spurred, and in his tippeted great-coat, and proclaimed, lustily, 'Lads and lasses, we've got Boney to the wall at last; we're going to thrash the marrow out of him now. Our triumphs will soon be ended, we'll have no more to win. Here, Miss Fielding, you've young eyes and a fine tongue, you'll read the news; but first call Elspie and the other lass, that all may get word of the war. Katie Drysdale's dull of hearing, and the laddie, Jock, is minding the

beasts, or I would go and fetch them myself. Now, my lady, speak out, and speak plain.'

Archie Buchan's sunk eyes flashed, and Bride began, as she was told, in a high, proud voice, soon concluding the main paragraph, and wandering through the profuse animadversions, the scoffs, and the hootings, which were to revenge the 'perfide Albion' of the malignant press on the other side of the Channel. All at once Bride's voice fell; she had a perception, swift as lightning, that, of all the quivering faces around her, one was cold in the grey tint of an agony of passive interest, while the lips were bitten, and the brow contracted with sharp pain. He did not bend forwards to the reader, he drew back towards the door; but he, too, hung upon her words, thirsting for the draught bitter with humiliation and insult.

Oh, cruel fortune! that would never end the lashes inflicted by one treacherous step. The disastrous double allegiance was racking him as hard as ever, and he should have been the last man to experience the curse of instability. Yet the evil would not die; —the cold Frenchman yonder was the alienated Briton here, and he had never been so denaturalized as now. When Bride stammered on in her narrative, and repeated an exaggerated and distorted account of a skirmish, the old imperious nature was goaded beyond bounds. A cry of wrath burst through the clenched teeth, a passionate denial in his acquired and native tongues broke the stillness.

'C'est un mensonge, ce sont de braves soldats. It is a lie, these are brave soldiers. Mes camarades! mes camarades!'

The vanquished was there, at bay among his conquerors, in the quiet, courteous dweller among them, whose separate existence they had almost forgotten. The national animosity smouldering fiercely in Silvercraigs' stubborn heart, fanned by his present excitement and his potations in Silverton, and thus openly defied, leapt up into terrible life. One moment he stood silent and absolutely motionless, but the sweat-drops gathered on his forehead, and his blue eyes glared; the next, he made a step forward, and clenched his great hand—his roof-tree was then as a cobweb over him.

'Sir, how dare you put in your word? How dare you contradict what is here in print, at my own hearth, and before my own folk? A runaway villain, that should never have crept into an honest house! I say, have you blood to spare?'

'Laird! Laird!' remonstrated Archie Buchan, starting up with a false strength.

'Oh! Mr. Leslie, cousin—and Mrs. Leslie from home,' gasped Bride.

'Silvercraigs! Silvercraigs! for mercy's sake, haud down your hand, and dinna strike,' skirled Elspie.

'Hold off, Archie, man, and mind Bruce and Rob Roy, and do not turn a traitor loon and blackneb for any foreign spy. What ails the silly girl? Elspie, you huzzie, go but the house this minute,

and leave me to manage my own business. I say I'll be contradicted by no man, and least of all by a miserable Frenchman.'

But clear and distinct rose Captain Francie's accents above Silvercraigs' furious stutter, and that was no coward's eye which met and mastered the glance of the enraged and dangerous gentleman. He spoke slowly enough now, in English, accompanied by his slight, emphatic, characteristic gestures, and there was deep sadness in his confession and atonement.

'Silvercraigs, I have ate and drank with you—whether you fully willed it or no signifies not to me—from seedtime to harvest. Then, again, you might be my father. I am sorry that I have spoken out, but I love France, and would to God that I had died with my brothers, where I am assured they fell, face to face with your bayonets.'

The sedate, dauntless answer turned aside even Silvercraigs' hatred, but the thunder sank growling. 'Mounseer,' he said, discontentedly, 'it is well, perhaps, that no harm is done. I grant that I forgot our hands were tied, mine not the least; but take care another time how you meddle with me and my cracks or my news.'

Captain Francie gathered up his papers and quitted the room to sit on his bed in the gloom, not whistling or singing to-night, but reckoning up each bloody battle-field over which Great Britain was huzzaing, and saying to himself that the tide was turning, and

the Chief—the mighty, glorious Chief—was falling, falling.

The parlour was at peace again, as Silvercraigs spelt over a second time his tidings, save when Archie Buchan made a nervous movement, or Bride Fielding sighed softly. The Lady returned with her look of integrity and charity, and carefully exchanged her holiday silk for her common wear of the same lasting and appropriate material, as on any common occasion. Silvercraigs returned from the horse-suppering, and stretched himself, like an unwieldy giant; and, as on his first evening at Silvercraigs, Captain Francie descended from his voluntary confinement, and stood looking out on the quiet yard and the still night, but no longer solitary and forlorn; while Elspie milked the cows, and chattered about 'how the Captain had stood up for his ain; no doubt, bad as they were, they were his ain; and Silvercraigs had braggit the Captain, and what would the town say?' interspersed with appeals and commands to Cowie to 'stand still like a woman and she would get her grass belyve;' and Saunders insisted that Silvercraigs was 'right, ay, right; every French dog should be kept on the Bass, or locked up into the Castle—a fell-like spectacle it was, to see them at large like gentlemen, taking their ease and pleasure, and good Scots holding the plough, or breaking stones, or digging in ditches, if they were not aff to the sodgering;' Archie Buchan delayed his short walk home to limp to the side of Captain Francie, as Jonathan clung to David, in his gruff kindness and dour fidelity.

'Do you see any sight of the moon, Captain Francie? I say, sir, never heed Silvercraigs. He is carried away to-night, but it will be all out of head to-morrow. He is not the man to ill-treat a prisoner, or to bear malice for a hasty word.'

'I am content, Archie, my friend. The day is his, but it will come to an end. Pray remember the dew.'

Five minutes later, another foot, not heavy and broken, like Archie Buchan's, but light as a fairy's, stepped daringly across the hallan, and a voice that was wont to jeer at him furtively, if it took note of him at all, spoke at his elbow—so sweetly, in its sudden, direct friendliness, that young Sweethope might be pardoned his infatuation.

'I am come to thank you, Captain Francie, for lending me your help on the bleaching-green this afternoon—it was kind. And you are not vexed with my cousin, the Laird; he is rough, but he would hurt no one.'

'The wildest wind does not unhorn cattle, though they say so across the water. And you are too good, Miss Fielding,' and he bowed low and formally, and drew back.

'Frank, Frank Boyle.' The voice was very faint, shaken, and wobegone, as if a ghost was condemned to sigh it forth, at last, on the heavy night air; and no living, hopeful woman gave it utterance roundly and strongly.

'I beg your pardon,' Captain Francie resisted,

hoarsely; 'you do not address me, Miss Fielding.' And Bride was foiled.

Man of iron or of stone, stern, unrelenting heart, pitiless to her weakness, if not to his own; he was no more an Irishman than she was a woman of the world—oblivious of earlier feeling, greedy of later gain and glory. And while Bride thus stigmatized him, the Irishman was in his covert, not gesticulating in his hereditary or his foster nationality, not pressing all down in his breast in his counter individuality, but surely groaning of retribution—and how long it would last—and madly allowing himself to apostrophize once more the single, dear, long-forbidden name—'Oh! Bride, who might have been mine. Oh! Bride, still the same, as in the blessed old days. Oh! sweet, well-beloved, never-relinquished Bride Fielding.' And while Bride misinterpreted and condemned him, he was all the time so unfortunate, so constant to his friends in adversity, so manly in his freedom from bravado and his ordinary patience and cheerfulness, so cruel in his ever-watchful remembrance to meet and balk every impulse of pity and remorse, so veritably, after all, the old hero, the centre of the vain, girlish, fanciful love and of the girlish passion and despair—so near once with rolling seas betwixt them, so far apart now within the narrow bounds of the same house—young Sweethope's bashful homage, his ignorant, oppressive, spick-and-span new devotion, rose like a feather in the unequal balance.

CHAPTER XV.

FRESH BLOSSOMS ON AN OLD TREE.

RIDE had called on Jean Blamire in that full house of her own, and tried to admire the comforts and dainties which doting Baillie Lindesay was lavishing on his young wife, and wondered if Jean felt fluttered when she asked how they fared out at Silvercraigs, when Silvercraigs was so connected with the Shaw, and when she confessed, in her prattle and her rashness, that she was spotting a muslin scarf just to keep her hand occupied—Mr. Lindesay wanted her to do nothing except look at her fingers, but she had noticed that petted fine ladies were sometimes wearier from sheer idleness than poor folk who worked hard for their living. Had philosophy come to Jean, and come too late?

The blithe battle of harvest was well over, and there was the talk of the 'kirn' at Silvercraigs. But before the deliberate Silvercraigs' retainers and the stubborn Laird had cut down the scattered crop,

the season was far advanced. The rowan at Bride's window was crowned with coral; the common ashes at Silvercraigs were drained of their depth of hue to the pale apple-green which heralds the fall of their fluttering leaves; the saughs in the loan were fast dropping their shrivelled plumes; the red burn, 'roaring and reaming,' was sighing and sobbing a lament for its summer sunshine; and the Silverton market had come round with its cattle, its stalls, and crowds of country people, from the Lady of Silvercraigs, with her dress tucked through her pocket-holes and her hand on the Laird's arm, helping her husband to criticise the stock, with a notice to each farmer whom her father had served, and who now proudly returned the Lady of Silvercraigs' salutation; and the young country ladies in their velvet pelisses—Miss Margery with her dog-whistle, Miss Annabella with her sandals and her satin muff, with many a farmer's bonny, simple young daughter—down to stout, ruddy, open-mouthed lasses of Elspie's degree, and cotter wives, their cloaks or tartan screens drawn over their clean caps, accompanied by their entire families—above all, by the baby in arms and the half-grown boy in corduroys, waiting his turn at the cooper's stall, where the blushing bride was pricing her bright blue painted or cream-coloured tub, in order to achieve his first independent piece of property—the wooden bowl to contain his well-earned allowance of milk and meal.

Silverton for the day changed its tone; the maiden-

lady town rocked with noise and gaiety. In addition to the grand stalls, held in proper value, there were the wonderful, delightful shows, the Punches and monkeys, the caravans, with attendant giants and dwarfs; and this year—far surpassing every other attraction—there was a van belonging to a disabled soldier, and rich in sundry precious relics—a tattered standard, a portion of a battered eagle, crusted balls which had dug deep in famous earth, and the very 'bloody sark' in which a hero had ridden to his last charge. There was music, in the shape of a couple of droning bagpipes, blown by strutting Highlanders in waving costume, and a fiddle, played finely by a white-haired, beaming-eyed old Lowlander. There was a deliberate surrender to the enjoyment of the market, and a secret satisfaction in its ingredients; and only a few persons present held the gaiety business-like, and the mirth sometimes caustic and grim.

Yet Bride had enjoyed the sights, and acquired a large amount of fairing from the Laird and Lady, young Sweethope, and others, almost approaching at a distance the old vast accumulations of the 'Brooke' —but one who might in any light have been called an old acquaintance, paid her no tribute. And Bride had dragged Mrs. Leslie into a back street, that she might surreptitiously look up at a sallow, black-eyed, turban-crowned head, at a high window—a queer, restless head, belonging to the lively body of a French prisoner's wife, who had compassed land

and sea, and foemen's lines, to share her husband's poverty, and sufferings, and bonds, on a foreign soil. If all had been known—how lovely Miss Fielding, Silvercraigs' Irish cousin, one of the belles of the day, the liveliest and pleasantest on the ground, sickened with envy at the sight of the outlandish exile—how the world would have stared! Ah! there is no use arguing the point; all the blessings we do possess will not reconcile us, in this life, to the desire of the heart denied us.

Bride had gone home early in the afternoon with Mrs. Leslie; and in the broken-up purposelessness of the remnant of the day, and because Silvercraigs was so dull by contrast, in order to render it duller, Bride strolled out again across the yard, and sat down by the water, idly regarding the lily-white ducks, Mrs. Leslie's pets, ducking their heads, shaking their wings, and scuttling about the pools—a spotless, contented brood, like that which the great Scotch minister long and fondly remembered having been accustomed to point out, in his peaceful country-walks, to his excited little daughter. 'The white ducks I showed to Anne' figured in a distant, far-spread diary.

Stragglers returning from the market trod now and then the opposite foot-path, and vanished on some of the visible field-ways, but Bride scarcely attended to them. In the bright barrenness of the first stripping of the landscape—in the withering, wild weeds, once constituting a flowery belt, which Ophelia might have robbed for her fatal coronal,

Bride's mind was away to the nipped, fading buds lying behind, and the bright barrenness stretching before her—Dublin and Merrion-street; the Blakes and Mrs. Anty; Gracey and Molly; the reviews and the theatre; her father and mother, so much fonder than kind Silvercraigs and mindful Mrs. Leslie; and young Frank Boyle, the fondest of all—yes, the fondest of all; and Dolly Nugent and Mr. Carew, who tried each other's hearts, and found them wanting; with the verse of her poet written over them all:—

> 'The smiles and tears of boyhood's years,
> The words of love then spoken,
> The eyes that shone now dimmed and gone,
> The happy hearts now broken.'

Well might pretty, winning Bride Fielding feel old and worn on that October day; well might she wish for the return of spring, and say to herself that autumn was too much for her—too tender, too sorrowful and thrilling in its faint, chill, expiring breath. It was only for austere men, like that dour servant of Silvercraigs' father's, who quarrelled with his sweetheart when they were both young, after they had been proclaimed bride and bridegroom, and dwelt with her fifteen years in the same farm-town unreconciled, and then, after a still longer probation than Jacob served for Rachel, forgot and forgave, and, growing grey, fulfilled their early contract. How could they endure? How could the man never waver, never experience a soft moment, a yielding

hour? How could the faded woman survive the hope deferred or the ever-present despair? How dared she disgrace womanhood by her final submission? Yet how marvellously sweet the late acknowledgment of her power! How priceless the lingering, struggling, irresistible love, which at last conquered a rude Hippolytus! What a boon for poor crushed woman, to forgive like a queen wrongs which a queen never knew!

Bride scarcely admitted the connexion between the two threads of her reflections, but it seemed like an echo to one gossamer line when she was hailed from the opposite side of the water by a voice whose broad brogue, from her own dear island, issued in the present case straight from the penthouse of a ragged bonnet on the head of a squat, brown, middle-aged little woman, in travelling mantle, with the boldest, most grinning little Paddy, showing teeth like milk, and chestnut hair of the consistency of thick fur, in her hand. The child was still in the mild petticoats of nonage, but he looked saucy enough to have worn tattered, long-tailed coats, and crownless hats. And Bride Fielding had not seen the shamrock, or smelt poteen, or exchanged the real Irish diamond of a compliment, for almost a whole year! Verily, she prepared to ford the water on the instant—all trembling, and half laughing, half weeping with agitation, seeing that the suggestion of the ultra-fine, fashionable satirical song, though not

particularly applicable, was the only one that occurred to her:—

> 'You see the ducks and geese how they swim over.
> Fal-lal-a, fal-lal-a,' &c.

But her countrywoman anticipated her intention by tucking grinning little Paddy more closely to her side and plunging boldly into the flood, and—probably a little to the purification, and certainly not much to the detriment, of their apparel—landed on the gorse-grown bleaching-green in a trice.

'Musha! do you think I'd have a lady cross a brook to meet me, though it had run fire and not water, and she not only the prettiest lady to the fore, as the gentleman told me, but a *rale* old Irish young lady, that it makes my heart leap with pride to hail as belonging to me in this cold country?'

'But how did you know I was Irish?' asked Bride, in surprise.

'Sure it's written on your frank brow, and your kind lip—the gentry's lip, Madam, which was never put up at the poor and needy. And if I had been too stupid to read the signs, and the child, that is as sharp as a needle, had overlooked them, didn't the fine young French gentleman, speaking the best of English, direct me? Agrah! he's seen the Bay, yon lad. "Seek out a pretty young lady, in a grey gown that hangs about her like a mist, but, mind, she's the sun shining through the mist, and give her the treat of bestowing the likes of a crown-piece for the sake of ould Ireland."'

Bride's heart beat fast and thick; she lost sight of her nationality; she neglected to ask Nelly Flaherty if she knew Dublin and Merrion-streeet; she stood, her lips apart, her breath quivering forth. By no means did she credit Nelly's statement entirely, but she judged it had some foundation, and the slight incident shook her wonderfully. He trusted her, he referred to her, he made common cause with her, after all.

When Bride recovered herself she wanted to conduct Mistress Nelly Flaherty to the house where Silvercraigs and Mrs. Leslie, for her sake, would have entertained her liberally; but this natural proceeding did not form part of Nelly's tactics. Nelly's hawk's eyes perceived fast enough that more was to be won from the pretty Irish lady to whom the French officer had recommended her, in a private interview by the Silver water, than under the eyes of a prudent, thrifty Scotch Laird and his Lady, even supplemented by their alms and their entertainment in their warm, low-roofed, smoke-stained kitchen. So Nelly declared herself clean 'bate,' and unable to face more strangers; only she had walked out of the town to delight her eyes with a glimpse of a 'rale' lady of the right stock ere she took needful rest in preparation for her further journey.

Nelly was a rogue, if ever one existed; but who knows what troubles she had undergone, or how much tenderness yet lurked in her calculating heart? Little Paddy was a rogue in his turn—the blue eyes

defied you, the milky teeth laughed out at you; precept and example would have been blank shot fired at that hard, half-stoical, half-epicurean nature; but still you shook your head, and sighed, and smiled, and looked again at the young rebel, who did not even own a frozen potato or an airy pair of hose to laugh over, yet who laughed out upon the whole world. Oh, Paddy! thoughtless, inconsiderate, irreclaimable Paddy! steady old hearts warmed to you till you wearied them wellnigh beyond all toleration, by your recklessness and your infidelity.

The couple were wife and son to a soldier in his Majesty's service, but Dan the crater had not been allowed to take them farther than the Scotch port from which his detachment of the depôt had at length sailed; they were wandering homewards, after shearing the harvest, as they best might; and although Nelly could utter a deplorable professional whine over their undertaking, certainly few travelling beggars were better furnished with capacities to shift for themselves.

Bride dealt leniently with their failings, and presented Nelly on the spot with two bran-new crowns; one was for the love of old Ireland, and the other—shame, shame, Bride, after all your resolutions—the other was a weak pandering to the unjust liberty used with your name and nature by a mis-sworn and dastardly man. An impulsive response, where answer there should have been none, because, forsooth! the result was not within his scrutiny, and he would

never know how you had looked and acted. So ran the silly argument.

Silvercraigs was late abroad that night and a-foot the most of next day, to get rid of his headache; but at the Lady's social tea-table, where there was only one shadow in the person of Captain Francie, having exhausted the news of the market, he broke into a new subject, and attacked Bride Fielding. 'What beggar was bold enough to pick your pocket on the very green last night, Bride, my lass, as Katie Drysdale informed me?'

It was not in human chances that Captain Francie's eyelids should not flicker, or that he should not smile a little under his beard, or that Bride should not see it for a second, while she blushed like a foolish child as she told herself, and stammered that she had been asked to relieve a countrywoman.

'Fie for shame, Silvercraigs,' put in Mrs. Leslie. 'Why need you speer such questions? Miss Fielding is fit to guide her own charities. It would be hard to obey the command, not to let the left hand know what the right hand doeth, with you to the fore.'

'Bride and you are fine judges, Madam, sure not to be imposed upon; women never were, you ken' (the Laird was notoriously simple when taken upon his bent, and the Lady was often forced to restrain him); 'no, bring all applicants to me, Bride, Sweethope and all; I'll engage to settle with them, and see that you are not wronged.'

Again Captain Francie was foiled in his aim of

perfect equanimity, and consented to compromise the matter by a hasty retreat. Fool! and thrice a fool! to venture on a secret between them, and still fancy they could keep apart.

They held the kirn at Silvercraigs—that kirn for which Bride had giddily wearied from her first sojourn in the grave Scotch household, and it was worth her expectations. The brown barn, rib-roofed like a ship, was cleared for the night in the wide centre, the darker corners still retaining pale corn 'bings,' such as that on which the dowie lover, in dear old Grizel Baillie's song, flung himself, disconsolate, and hills of light rustling straw—perilous ware to come in contact with light of coal, candle, or oil cruizie, and enforcing constant caution in the wildest of the revellers, but affording at the same time the softest of retired, sheltered ottomans, sofas, settees, now in the bright prevailing gleam, now in the strong relief of dusky shadow. The golden sheaf of the 'maiden' was busked with one of Bride Fielding's sashes, and hung in a conspicuous niche. The company were of all degrees and ages—the Laird in his blue coat, and his rare pomatum and powder; the Lady, fresh and comely as any, quietest and most watchful there, in her rich, silvery lutestring; Bride in her white gown—that prettiest half-dress, which was not a ballroom attire, filmy tarletane, or even India muslin, but equally fit for kirk and market, for coolness during 'the preachings,' and freshness at the neighbourly tea-drinkings, with the long white

gloves, and the pensive lavender *negligée*, and the late straw-coloured honeysuckle and the scarlet berries from her rowan-tree in her breast, lighting up her half mourning; and the lasses in general, with snood-like blue or pink ribands, their last fairings, in their braided flaxen or raven hair; and the lads, with knee-breeches and shoe-buckles, as Wilkie has left them to us; and the jolly old fiddler winding up the others. Such pies! such punch! even Bride had not seen *them* surpassed. And she had a great, well-blended, agreeable idea of the merry-making, with a subtle sense of the all-pervading decorum, so staid and severe in some members of the party, that it implied an utter want of appreciation of holidays to her uninitiated eyes, in addition to an abundance of argument and an absence of fighting, though black brows scowled at each other more vindictively and unrelentingly, she would have declared, than she had ever seen them do for five consecutive minutes in the riotous Green Island.

Young Sweethope was present. They had not seen much of him at Silvercraigs lately; he was getting always more downhearted, and lapsing into more and more pernicious episodes at trysts and fairs; but Bride encouraged him to-night; if anything, she danced a little too often with him, and talked more kindly than she should have done, remembering how impassioned were the long looks and the short words which she was inflaming. But Bride was flighty to-night, as beauties and belles will

be sometimes, and staggered by the tantalizing mingled presence and absence of attentions—contrasts which assail the queens of most feasts.

At last they footed the old measure which they danced at the marriage of Con Boyle and Mary Power an age ago, which they try in France under the auspices of the fairest of empresses, and call by the name of one of the figures of the cotillon.

Captain Francie had not been dancing, in spite of Mrs. Leslie's requests, and the coquettish inviting glances of the country lasses, whom he had often passed at their work, and greeted cheerily. All of a sudden, he moved into the warm, quivering, rosy ring, and was welcomed readily; even Patrick Home in his exhilaration did not object and cry the circle was closed. Bride stood within the swaying, bantering prison walls, as she had done once already, and the handkerchief fluttered again in her grasp. 'Catch it, Sweethope;' 'Be frank, lass, and fling it to Sweethope;' 'Nay, Bride, woman, show that a lass can be honest and kind,' resounded on all sides, and particularly from the Laird.

With a single exception, Bride had not spoken to Captain Francie, save slightingly and carelessly, for these five months; and besides, she had received no communication from him, held no intercourse with him, unless through the word of Nelly Flaherty, or the sparkle of a stolen and withdrawn look during the interval. She did not understand his scruples, his silence, his shame; she had been a moment since

resentful, aggrieved to the quick, and yet, oh! man, triumph if you will, when Frank Boyle, not Captain Francie, gazed full at her, 'laughed on the lass with his bonny blue eye,' as a bird the lure, Bride obeyed her master, and the handkerchief fell again straight at his feet. Alas! alas! infatuated Bride, indefensible Bride, you were no girl—a girl would have been more pettish, more shrewish, more self-willed, more stony-hearted. There is no fool, not even the far-famed Fool of Quality, like a tried woman in the tenderness of her full womanhood.

But for men, is not this a very acceptable statement? Did not Captain Francie cancel his offences with royal facility? Did he not employ a royal fascination with a royal supremacy? Was he not towering above the poor woman whose 'desire was to him,' and whom he could resign or recall at his pleasure? Are you not satisfied, oh! men, that here is an instance recorded where the man is in his proper place; where there is no morbid theory that he has been unable or unworthy to grasp his birthright, until he has been brought very low by trouble, and purified by a fight of affliction; until it is the offering extorted from pity—that mild mediator and beneficent intercessor, but much-scorned friend? As for the women, let them cry shame on Bride, as she had cried shame on that peasant bride; but let them not forget to claim something like unto the divine in the old, old inextinguishable obliviousness and bounty of the love of woman.

It is very little excuse for Bride that she knew right well now—that when the stare and laugh would be borne, and she should slip from the dance, and steal from the barn, and walk in her recklessness across the yard, steaming with the breath of cattle, adown the rimy footpath in the gathering gloaming, Captain Francie would follow after her, and hands and lips would be unlocked in the dimness and the silence, only broken by the hush of the water, and the faint and ever fainter notes of the festivity, and hearts would speak to hearts—hearts which had long remained silent in the broad day.

'Miss Fielding, Bride Fielding!'

'Frank Boyle!'

'At this moment you remember Dublin and all the past?'

'Do I not?'

And the woman's tears and the man's words flowed fast and free together, and the drought of the long-forsaken and forlorn heart was refreshed as by balm, and the weight on the man's breast was lightened. One may guess the woman's solace, but who can tell the relief to the unfortunate man, to pour out his errors and his humiliation, to feel that he was sending them to their natural refuge, where they would be hoarded, hidden, safe, and sacred and dearer than another man's triumphs?

No more of the loneliness, the self-concentration, the everlasting silence, which constitutes true exile, and chokes, and withers, and breaks the highest heart. This man was no longer an outlaw, a rebel,

an alien, a mercenary; he was restored, and forgiven, and re-established in his rights from that moment. The misled native of a country at once sorrowing for his infatuation, and returning to his duties, the unruly subject submitting to punishment, and swearing fresh allegiance, the penitent sinner giving God thanks from the bottom of his heart—as he poured out his confession as Bride listened, and sympathized, and consoled, and never dreamt of condemning him, but was folded in his arms as if they had never been raised in the French service, or paralysed at last when turned against his countrymen.

'Why did you not speak to me, Frank? Why did you not trust me sooner—from the first?'

'Because I was not prepared to make you a party to my disgrace and loss. I was startled, distressed—yes, tortured. It was so strange that you, of all women, should come to Scotland and this country house to find me out. It would have been too hard to suffer your pain and indignation. It was easier to deny all knowledge of you, and to demand the same reserve from you for common humanity's sake. This was never the end for you and me.'

'Why not? It was sad, but oh! it was far, far the best I had heard of for many a day. Did you not believe I was waiting for you, Frank Boyle?'

Yes, he could believe it at last, and he understood what that waiting meant—he was a wise man and a thoughtful in his generation. She had been faithful to him to the best of her sensitive woman's nature,

and she had mused upon him till his very personality became a vision, and re-encountered the reality after a lapse of years, and in very different circumstances, with a shock of surprise, vexation, and sore perplexity; and her history seemed to have waxed to him like an idyl drowned by many a distracting trumpet-blast and many a gloomy 'Dead March in Saul;' but the idyl was piping anew, and the fond will was reviving the dead, and shaping it afresh into its web, and stretching its threads to compass and control each cross line more indefatigably and effectually than ever. And the old affection, grown young again, when it has solid nourishment, and is not the 'dead lion' opposed to the 'living dog,' is so much the more powerful and immortal, that it is in a great degree a moral result, and belongs to the fixity of purpose and constancy of regard which help to render man but 'a little lower than the angels.'

The rural Scotch burn, the twinkling windows shining into the stackyard, the vigorous fiddle and the bouncing dancers in the barn, the cold and dulness of the autumn night, the hopeless depression of his fortunes, the blank delay in hers—all merge as accessaries into the gush of freed confidence and happiness, strong and sweet as sealed-up fountains, and speak loudly of the Eden of closest union to the isolated pair.

Yet there is another actor in the scene, another interlude in the drama which we all play, consciously

or unconsciously. Where the whins and broom form a thick hedge on the bleaching-green, a man has lurked for many moments, and now lies prostrate, with his very head in the whitening grass, as if it were sprouting on his grave. It is nothing to you or him that he is a great fellow, in a flaming scarlet waistcoat, with a tangled head of hair above his broad face, and a fist that could fell a bull—misery is not the less misery on that account, misery is 'no respecter of persons.' He came out in ignorant, illusive bliss, he has eaten his fruit of the tree of knowledge, and writhes and grovels there in the depth of woe. He had traced the loitering woman, he had seen the hurrying man, he had been cognizant when hands and lips met, and although he thrust his fingers in his ears, he seems to have heard the passionate words. The flowery summer and fruitful autumn were ended, and his summer was gone that night. He lay there in the chill October blast, rising to riot through the full stackyard, and turn the scientifically-thatched stack tops, and recked little of Sweethope and crops and corn, fairs and cattle trysts, his old father and mother, and even Heaven on high. 'It was true,' he groaned; 'I aye kenned it, that loon would come between her and me; she was over frank and sweet not to be deceived; and they are all thieves and liars. I'll never gain her now—never. Silvercraigs may whistle his call till he is tired. I wonder what hinders me from slaying him where he stands; I'm going to

destruction any way. It is not half a mile from the Nine Stanes, where the knight slew his rival and was slain himself, lang syne; they had their priests and their Bibles as well as we, for there is a cross on the middle stane, and it is but two or three hundred years syne; the lasses speak softly still, alike of the murdered man and the murderer. Then none would get her, and she would maybe mourn for both, for she is kind, though she has been cruel, too, to me. What hinders me?'

He lay a while still and cold, and then he rose stiffly; he was alone, as he discovered for himself, looking unwillingly and fearfully around. The couple who had kept him company had returned in their joy, and their good understanding, to the light, the joviality, and the great ceremony of the supper. They had sufficient motive for prudence and self-restraint; he had none from without, only what was within and above him. 'But I will not,' he took an oath with his conscience; 'I am stupid enough, and may turn reprobate enough, but I'm not come to this. I have read my Bible, and sat in the kirk, and answered questions to my old mother and the minister with a great deal of work and not much comprehension, but there has been this good in them, that I will not 'strike a man to his injury,' or 'a young man to his hurt,' save in drink, or when he is fain to fight, and it is a fair battle. I will not wrong him in Christ's name, though there be a cross on yon stane; and more than that, I said I would dee for her sake, and

I will do more—more than ever auld knight accorded to gay lady. I'll let him live and make her happy; I'll not say a word or lift a finger against it. What signifies it, if I never hold up my head again; never as I did before Miss Fielding, Silvercraigs' Irish cousin, came over to Silvercraigs to bewitch us all.'

Perhaps such a resolution as poor young Sweethope's is recorded by other than mortal tongue or hand.

CHAPTER XVI.

OLD WORLD FIDELITY.

LET it be said again that no love—not the 'love's young dream' which Moore extolled—is comparable to that miraculous effect of old love grown young again, with the truth of its ly familiarity, and the chivalrous grain of its e fidelity. Bride Fielding was a happy woman ıose clouding over, shortening days, when the d took to partridge-shooting, and the Lady was pounding her last butter and cheese for the sea- and Jean Lindesay looked blankly out into the d Silverton streets, with her fine face, in spite of her and her luxuries, growing thin and white like her ıer's, and wished she could sleep like a dormouse the winter, nay, throughout the next summer for what change did summer bring into Mr. lesay's office or the flat above, any more than into Misses Hislops' workroom. But the old ladies .d miss her; they counted even more on her ıtions and company now that she was inde-

pendent; and so would douce Thomas Lindesay, who looked sometimes with hasty, puzzled, wistful glance at the young wife, who was either so wildly gay or so wearily quiet, but who did not forget the exact proportion of sweet milk to his bicker of porridge in the morning, and of squeezed limes and Highland whisky and water in his punch; and brushed his brown coat and plaited his frills as no careless quean of a servant had ever attended to them; and read the newspaper to him when his eyes were exhausted; and played games at the dominoes, which the French lads had introduced into Silverton, as they did into Dalkeith, assiduously. Did you ever perceive the mortal strain which is bound up in the vow of the simple, sacred heroine of the song,

'I'll do my best a gude wife to be,
For auld Robin Gray is a kind gudeman to me?'

Captain Francie was full of hope and heart, though he had on his shoulders all the difficulty and impropriety of a private engagement to Silvercraigs' cousin. Bride and he met and consulted any time and anywhere. In the garden behind the lilac bushes; in the deserted yard, where only the sheep-dogs and cocks and hens could give tongue, and when the Laird and the Lady were superintending the workers in the potato-field; in the drawing-room, when Bride at the spinnet had played the Laird asleep, and he was, alas! snoring unmistakeably; in the parlour, ere the master and mistress of the house had appeared in company for tea; in the kitchen, where Captain

Francie was sent to dry his jacket, and Bride was trying Elspie's wheel on the wet afternoon, when Elspie and her neighbour were serving in the barn, and the important first oats were passing through the mill; in the morning, ere even the Laird was stirring; in the evening, when none else save the Lady was yet afoot; and unsuspected for a short time by all, except, indeed, by poor Archie Buchan, who leant his head on his hands, and kept their counsel. Archie even came across from the Shaw with the last of his mother's balsams, which Bride was attempting to paint (and a very trying flower it was to compass, as far as ease and elegance went, almost as bad as a hyacinth) for a new pair of hand-screens for the Lady, and there was some notion abroad that Captain Francie was to frame them, and the errand hinted broadly that Archie bore her no malice, though she had somehow appropriated and accepted his Captain Francie. Certainly, Captain Francie did not forget this first friend in the second, who was so much nearer and dearer, and as certainly Archie had bitterly resented the former slight to his David. Archie had no reasonable ground of complaint; but are we strong ones apt to be reasonable in our murmurs?

Of course Bride told Captain Francie all about her little fortune, and he was glad of it for both their sakes; though it inspired him with mixed feelings. It made his course easier. He would not have allied her to his poverty, had he not found that her heart was his; and after he had made that dis-

covery, it would have been a proud mockery to refuse to take the rest which that heart was proud to bestow, and be comforted, tender, and true. He would get work from Mr. Lindesay; he would ask for recommendations from Dr. Fowler; he would give lessons in languages or fencing. He did not fear to demean himself, he had learnt other lessons abroad. It would be singular if he should fail or fall short, when less able prisoners in need could scrape together a livelihood. Bride and he differed on this obligation, but he stuck to the point, and to another on which he had come to a rapid decision. Captain Francie would not remain any longer under Silvercraigs' roof; he would negotiate for a removal to other quarters, even to the depôt at Kier. If possible, he would procure a private lodging in Silverton, where he could hire additional accommodation, and to which he might soon convey the most wilful, daring, and prodigal of wives.

There was another thing of which Captain Francie only thought, but which he would fain have accomplished also, had it been within the compass of a man's attainment. In his penitence he would have admitted his identity; he would have got quit of that grievous burden of silence and secrecy, and borne the punishment of his error, had it been within any proportion to the offence, with all its extenuations. But it did not seem to him that he was called upon to run so great a danger, to dare so terrible a sentence as condemnation for treason. He

did not believe that it was required of him to forfeit his life for his folly, to risk staining his fellow-men's hands with his blood. He credited it now less than ever. He rather imagined that it was part of his penalty to bear the weary load of concealment, unless the remote probability of discovery came suddenly upon him, and then he would face his fate like a man, and trust to the mercy as well as the justice of his judges, and pray to God to protect and comfort his Bride; and in contemplating that event, it appeared to matter little at this time of day whether she became his wife or no.

Bride was not even prepared for the first extremity. Though sincere and honourable in her inclinations, she would have temporized and procrastinated a little here; she feared what proved the result. The Laird was amazed and incensed at his prisoner's taking it upon him to propose an exchange from Silvercraigs—as if he did not get all he was entitled to —meat, drink, service, and comparative freedom; as if he was not treated fairly and civilly; insulting the house by a contrary supposition. Even the kind Lady, who looked upon him as not so much a guest but a kinsman, was grievously hurt by his fickleness; and there were gloominess and shyness enough and to spare in the atmosphere at Captain Francie's departure as at his arrival. If it had not been for Archie Buchan, he would have gone down the loan —his knapsack on his back, Flo at his heels, and Archie's fishing-rod over his shoulder, in place of his

old sword by his side,—without a convoy. Bride and he had half a quarrel that day, which might have risen to serious altercation had it not been for their very difficult position—they could not afford it. They dared not be more than scarce and dry in their stolen interviews; and the very next one they held, when Captain Francie returned as far as the Saugh trees and greeted Bride boldly, as Frank Boyle had been wont to do, and more laughingly than poor, anxious Frank had been given to, as if nothing and nobody were in fault, Bride could not find it in her heart to contradict him. Bbesides, Frank Boyle 'ruled over her;' and though she had clearer opinions, more rooted principles, and was better accustomed to act for herself than when they courted as boy and girl in Dublin, he had only to exert an honest supremacy to vindicate it, and he comprehended it, and, between them, Bride was never so happy a woman as when she submitted to his worthy power.

Very well, she had given in; he could not stay at Silvercraigs, and it was essential to his self-respect and honour that he should do what he could in his clogged and fettered condition, as many of his companions, in their ingeniousness and industry, were permitted to effect, to improve his circumstances, and provide for his share of a household. Mr. Lindesay would continue to patronize him, without oppressive inquiry as to how he became conversant with filing and endorsing, and without the least suspicion that he would pervert the talent to fortification and mili-

tary tactics generally; and, as Bride had funds of her own to set up a modest couple—as sufficient for the day was the evil thereof, and the war would not last for ever, there was nothing to defer the fulfilment of their vows.

Bride would not raise grave objections, or crave full time to think over the wedding; she so dreaded another separation, she so yearned to endow him with her worldly goods, and be sworn and bound over for the further term of her life to wait upon and watch over him, and to wage the rest of the battle of life supported by his arm, that she was really in strict secrecy ready to marry him without a wedding-gown or a new pin.

So that speedy conclusion was settled also, and the Laird and the Lady must be informed of what was in store for Bride Fielding. They could exert no authority over her prospects, enter no interdict to prevent an act of folly. There could but be incredulity, displeasure, and disgust, charges of ingratitude and duplicity, not altogether unwarranted, yet in their most evil substance without foundation, disappointment, and wrath over the discarded favourite and the false invader of their peace—at the worst, dismissal of Bride from her relatives' countenance and protection, which would but accelerate a hundredfold the meditated outrage. It was not a comfortable conjuncture; but what will not people encounter and force to compass their ends?

Bride would not suffer Captain Francie to break

the ice at Silvercraigs, though in Captain Francie's masculine combativeness, and in the spice of malice which lurks in all human compositions, it is possible that he regarded the proceeding with some other feelings besides consternation. But Bride got her own way here, by mingled terror and the inconsistency that she was determined herself 'to beard the Douglas in his hall;' that is, she would brave Silvercraigs in her own person, with her woman's weapons, and she would begin by addressing the Lady, appealing to the Lady, beseeching her intervention and influence to mollify Silvercraigs; and at this very time, fortunately or unfortunately as it might happen, the Laird was arrested in his sportsmanship, and laid aside groaning and resisting with rheumatic gout.

It is certain that Bride, with her native tact and her heart in the question, would go about her mission cunningly, make the most of the great apparent harmony of the house, since poor Captain Francie had retired, for it need scarcely be remarked that the Laird declined to elect a successor to the discontented Frenchman, and seize on the propitious moment when all the family were uplifted by the receipt of the intimation that Silvercraigs had won the Member's Sweepstakes for 'prime wethers,' to attack the outposts of Mrs. Leslie's favour by exquisitely fine attentions, and prepare to sap her opposition by gentle reference and pathetic allusion to her orphan state.

Withal it was not easy to approach even a serene, sedate matron with tidings which sounded so startling, and rash, and wrong. At last Bride reached the husky point of attack. 'I spoke to Captain Francie to-day down by the willows, Mrs. Leslie,' and received the unconscious response, 'He's aye walking about; he should become a rich man, for you ken our proverb, Miss Fielding, "A gaun fit is aye getting." You should have bidden him in when he was so near; we bear him no grudge, though he tired of us, that was clear to be seen;' and felt rather despairing, and as if the whole introduction must be gone over again. But despair, like necessity, prompts to the purpose.

'I dared not, Mrs. Leslie.'

'Dared not, bairn; what should ail you? Silvercraigs would not be vexed by such a trifle; he never refused man or beast, were it his worst enemy, bite or sup. Did you not like on your own account? You two need not be national foes, Bride; you are not the British volunteers. I thought you were making up to each other before he left.'

'We did, Mrs. Leslie; we are not foes, but friends.'

'Well! I am glad to hear it,' asserted Mrs. Leslie, innocently; 'we should all be friends if we can, but I think you might have been more cordial in your friendship. You must feel you've little liberty in your cousin's house.'

'Oh! no, no—it is because we are friends——'

Bride stopped. Mrs. Leslie had taken the alarm, and stood bewildered and shocked. Bride could not tell the whole truth, might not escape all blame, but she must do something, and risk something, to exonerate herself. She could not bear it otherwise. 'I knew him before, Mrs. Leslie. I met him long ago in Ireland. We were not strangers as we seemed.'

Here was worse and worse news. Alas! poor Bride, this was from one depth to another far greater.

'Were not what you seemed, Bride Fielding? Oh! I am grieved; the Laird will be sorely grieved; I will not mislead you, he will go clean mad.'

'Oh! Mrs. Leslie, feel for us, pity us. We did not mean to deceive you, we premeditated nothing, foresaw nothing. Ask him; you had some esteem for him, you would not suspect him of baseness. He quitted the house that he might not take advantage of you. When we parted first, we did not expect to meet again. You know we did not own each other. We did not read each other's minds. How could we proclaim abroad our acquaintaince, when it involved trouble and danger to him? And we have suffered, Mrs. Leslie; I wish I could make you understand how he has suffered.' Bride paused, white, faint, and suffocating with her feelings.

Mrs. Leslie was touched; she remembered the outline of the old story, she had a glimmering of the truth. She could not have more than an indistinct perception of the facts, but it had a great effect upon

her candid, merciful nature; it altered the entire complexion of the affair. 'Then I am to understand, Miss Fielding, that there was something between you and Captain Francie ere either of you dreamt of seeing Silvercraigs?'

'There was something between us,' Bride answered, very literally, in her earnestness; 'there was such love between us, that we want to prove it at this hour. There is no law against prisoners-of-war marrying, and Captain Francie and I will marry; and now I have told you and Silvercraigs.'

'Oh! lass, are you sure you're not carried away? Marriage is a solemn act, which you cannot do to-day and undo to-morrow. Dinna flee off on an idle impulse. You have not Jean Blamire's excuse, and who says Jean Blamire does not repent? Take heed, Miss Fielding; take heed, Bride. I ken Silvercraigs cannot lock you up, or send him across the sea again, but you may rue the hour that he was not able to do both, and hinder this wild wedlock.'

'I am not headstrong and unsteady, Mrs. Leslie; I am arrived at woman's years,' said Bride, with stateliness, for this was scorn of her loftiest, tenderest nature. 'I have known all these years that I would have married Captain Francie any day if he had obtained the opportunity. I would lose everything I possess, and bid farewell to every friend that remains to me, to follow him.'

'Nay, if it has gone this length,' Mrs. Leslie interrupted her, 'I have no more words to say against

it. I trow "many waters will not quench love." I wish you had been more straightforward, though doubtless, true love, like grace, is shy of expression. You'll have a battle to fight with Silvercraigs, you'll have tribulation in the world, for, depend upon it; the world will say this is a dafter match than that of Silvercraigs with his feuar's daughter. You'll have no great household routh, for the plenty of a single woman is but a slender provision for a family; but you ken best whether you'll carry your reward in your hand.'

'I never hoped to attain such a reward, Mrs. Leslie,' protested Bride, in the restored sobriety and conviction of her womanhood; 'I could not have asked to be more blest.'

Mrs. Leslie had no experience of dissimulation; she went directly and told the tale to Silvercraigs, at the risk of driving him into a fever, and with the certainty of drawing down on her own head the first ebullition of his rage.

Silvercraigs was, as the Lady had predicted, 'neither to hold nor to bind.' In the beginning he took refuge in dogged unbelief, and scouted at the implied degradation of his favourite. 'Away with it; if the lads of Dumfries were confounded, "when sweet Jenny Primrose gaed after the drum," how would the public of Silverton look, when Miss Fielding, his cousin, who might be mistress of Sweethope with a wag of her finger, threw herself into the arms of a French runaway, landless if not handless, and

nameless, and without the freedom which the meanest hind could boast. Tut! the Lady was demented to mention it for a single moment.' When driven from his stronghold of utter scepticism, you may be sure the Laird's indignation and aversion to the bare idea of the misalliance was not abated. 'Is this miserable Frenchman the fellow who caused Bride Fielding—the deluded gipsy—to wear the willow so long, do you tell me? I wish I had clapped him into the Tolbooth—I was free to take his very life. Hold your tongue, Annie, I'll not listen to a word against it. The villain!—he but to have been a spy in Ireland; they are not old enough to have colleagued together before the wars,' fumed the Laird.

'But spies are whiles permitted, and are not of necessity traitors. There were spies dispatched into the Promised Land, you mind, Laird, and the two who brought home the good report were the great Joshua and Caleb; and Rahab and her house were saved because she sheltered the Lord's spies; and I've heard you bemoan the fate of ane Major André, who met a cruel death in America playing the part of a spy.'

'You are a simple woman, Annie,' cried the aggrieved Laird, pettishly. 'This comes of quartering strangers; this is the thanks for my courtesy.' The Lady might have amended, 'This is the punishment of your contumaciousness and singularity;' but, being a marvellously gracious woman, she refrained.

'He's courted the quean for her gear,' swore Silvercraigs; 'and she will gift him with it every penny, just because he has none of his ain, or because every one else misdoubts him, or because she would sooner be blamed than praised. Oh, the women! the women!'

'But, Silvercraigs,' pleaded the conscientious, single-hearted Lady, 'I did not wed you for your gear; and when Captain Francie has gotten Miss Fielding's heart, what should she do better with her tocher than make it go the same gate? What's a' the steer about gear?'

'It is no reason that there should be another fule—and him a man—because you were a great fule, Annie.'

The Laird fretted a while longer on his uneasy chair. At last he imperiously summoned his cousin to his presence, and the Lady tried in vain to spare Bride the ordeal. Bride obeyed, trembling, but firm as a martyr, since she had no choice left her of begging Silvercraigs' pardon, bespeaking his generosity, craving his pity.

'Miss Fielding,' demanded Silvercraigs, sternly, 'tell me in a word—aye, or no—were you pledged to yon Frenchman who dared to darken my door?'

'I am pledged to your old prisoner, Silvercraigs.'

'That is enough,' concluded Silvercraigs, haughtily; 'I want to hear no more. Will it please you to leave my chamber?'

Once again Silvercraigs broke out violently in the

course of the afternoon, and the extraordinary motion showed how sharply he was stung.

'She may pack up, bag and baggage; she can go at once to her foreign canaille; she can seek some other screen for her rank, raving madness. Let them make a penny wedding of it; they'll get nothing from me.' But the good Lady gave such a cry—'Your own kinswoman, bidden among us—a stranger in the land. Laird, Laird, you could never have the heart to be so savage'—that Silvercraigs growled farther threats in his deep throat, turned his shoulder, and forbore to enunciate any more hideous proposals.

There was no room given to Bride for propitiation, or opening to Captain Francie for negotiation—tempting to perilous confession—perhaps the most fatal of all. Silvercraigs sedulously avoided the one, and transferred to the other the cold civility, the formal, reluctant intercourse—of all intimations of hostility and warfare the most intolerable from the estranged friend who has been till now brimming over with kindliness and rejoicing in frankness. The culprits had nothing to wait for. Silvercraigs was offended with a vengeance, and Bride writhed under the infliction; and yet she must have carried along with her a strong stay, for she would not have pawned the worry and chagrin of that autumn for a hundred such springs and summers as went before it.

It did not strike Bride until afterwards that it was singular that she should recur to Mrs. Leslie for

advice, and depend upon her good-will and assistance implicitly; but certainly, Mrs. Leslie never thought of declining the troublesome office, but was as sincere, sensible, gentle, and reliable as ever. 'You'll tell him to get you cried in the kirk next Sabbath; Silvercraigs will not be out to speak against your purpose, if he could not refrain; and you'll slip down, a morning or two after, to the manse, and be married, and go home with him without more ado, or anybody but Dr. Fowler being a bit the wiser as to the day and hour. That is the way the douce folk here manage a marriage which has the misfortune to be under a ban, for Scotch folk whiles marry—wilfully too, Miss Fielding. It was a great wonder when Silvercraigs got his mother's authority for his wedding—he should mind that. And so you will escape gossips, and bairns fighting to create a play out of your solemnity. It will be the easiest and pleasantest way for you, Miss Fielding. Silvercraigs might go out of the road for a day; but it is ill holding a marriage in a grudged as well as a borrowed house; and then the secret would not be kept, and there would be a public welcome home, and I fear there might be clamour and riot—but judge for youselves.'

Bride acquiesced, helplessly; yet this methodical, deliberate, well-understood elopement seemed very formidable to her—a world more so than any impetuous Irish form of the same excess.

Captain Francie handed their names to the clerk,

l the Silverton gossips had their awful roar. ɜy must have indulged in it, sooner or later, or ɜ they might have died of the restraint. Only vercraigs and poor young Sweethope—if they knew tinctively when the decisive step was taken—re-ined grimly silent. The people took out the for-.rance of the pair in their noise; Jean Blamire's rriage was an ordinary contract to this; and here great voice was divided into two cries—the power-, harsh notes; the thin, mean falsetto. The cracked, rn-out tones chorused with Silvercraigs on this oc-ion—condoled with him, lamented over him, with more zest that they did not hesitate to crow over a, also, in his improvidence and recklessness. e Laird was always a foolish man for his own in-ests, and now to be so affronted and set at naught that Frenchman, whom he had admitted from ɜtaken charity to his fireside, who might have a e in every country he had seen, and who would ıander this wife's money, and make love to other men, as part of his blood and breeding. And this ɜh cousin, whom Silvercraigs had petted far beyond deserts—it was very bad. And the young—shrill full—clear or rough accents shouted wherever ɜy dared, for the heedless offenders. 'Good luck them!' 'Long life to them!' 'Whatever people ɜht say, these two were owning that "Love was l the lord of all."' They might have been (in te of themselves) ungrateful and deceitful; they ɜht have been much to blame; but lovely, tochered

Miss Fielding misspending herself on one of the French prisoners, was the best tribute that love had won in Silverton for a year and a day. A poor girl had, ere now, linked her penniless fortunes with the prospects—at a lower ebb, of one of those wights, but Silvercraigs' cousin was another sort of gift. The silly juveniles of the town would have instituted an ovation to the couple, if they could have been persuaded to accept it.

Young Mrs. Lindesay, with her restless, haggard air, in her new white plaid, and gay red ribands, came out to Silvercraigs, belled the cat, and broached the subject to Bride Fielding beneath the cloudy sky, in the withering garden.

Bride was not ashamed of the charge; she answered and acknowledged it with spirit.

'I aye thought the unhappy French lad would be doubly captured; but that you should yield, you who were so particular!' subjoined Jean, in the off-taking way which was inadvertent with her, and which had so little mirth in it at this moment.

'I was particular,' allowed Bride, laughing a low, pleasant laugh; 'so particular, that my cousin Silvercraigs cannot comprehend it. I am sorry to vex Silvercraigs, but I cannot be very sad, Jean.'

'Is he your heart's desire, Miss Fielding? I would like to know, if you would just tell me. He's a comely lad enough, and clever, but he's as quiet as a Scotchman, and he's not so different from others—better off and liker you in their lots—unless,

indeed, he is your fancy, and you are set on him.'

'Then I am set on him; the light of my eyes, the darling of my heart,' exclaimed Bride, thus pressed, in pride and exultation, with shining eyes, freely translating her old 'Avourneens,' 'Astores,' and 'Acushla Machrees;' 'oh! much more, if you knew, if you only knew.'

'Well! I wish you joy, Miss Fielding, and I'm very glad, I'm sure I'm very glad,'—the dreariness of that reiteration.

Bride changed the conversation hurriedly, and began to speak with sense and feeling of Mr. Lindesay's goodness to Captain Francie, and she was pleased to find Jean gratified, and crying out eagerly, 'But why did you not expect it? I tell you Thomas Lindesay is an honest man, and a merciful man.' Bride was thankful that Jean had spoken such words when she had such difficulty in recalling them, after Jean wrung her hand painfully at parting, and whispered, 'You're well off, Miss Fielding; dinna let them say no; never let them dare persuade you the contrary; be thankful, oh! be thankful.'

The next morning was not the day privately fixed for Bride's marriage; but just as Bride was unobtrusively collecting her personal property, she found that Mrs. Leslie was busy filling a chest with what Scotch and German housewives regard as their jewels—fine satin-smooth and clear snow-white napery. Bride guessed its destination, and remon-

strated very respectfully and affectionately. 'I cannot consent to receive it; you forget that I can supply myself; Captain Francie would not agree to accept it. It is very kind of you; but what would Silvercraigs say?'

'I would like to see Silvercraigs meddle with my claith,' exclaimed the Lady, a little scornfully; 'and I hope Captain Francie will ken his place better than to interfere with his lady's claith. Na, na, Miss Fielding, your purse will supply you with trash of gowns as fast as you like, but it shall never be said a bride left Silvercraigs without a yard of claith. And Archie Buchan has been speering at me cannily when it is to be. His drift is not ill to tell; Mrs. Buchan will send her best cream-cheese and bacon-ham to handsel her son's friend's press. Eh! but poor Archie Buchan will miss Captain Francie.'

'Why should he miss him, Mrs. Leslie? Why must Captain Francie fail Archie Buchan because he has gained me?'

'My dear, there must be a great difference; though I do not mean that Captain Francie will lose sight of Archie, nor that you will envy the lad his light; far from that; for you are pleasant, kind creatures, you are like there—I could wish one of you had not been so pleasant, for the sake of young Sweethope,' sighed Mrs. Leslie.

'Sweethope is too big to be overcome, Mrs. Leslie.'

'Whisht! Bride Fielding; dinna laugh at a man's

distress; and the less that it is your own light day; big or little, what has that to do with an aching heart?' and for the first time lately, Mrs. Leslie spoke severely.

'Perhaps I laugh because I would not greet. But young Sweethope will soon forget me; he will like another girl better, and more for his happiness.'

'I dinna ken; Sweethope's slow but sure. No, I'm not free to say that he will outgrow his first love, though those that wish him well may pray for it; but, "least said is soonest mended." And about Captain Francie and Archie Buchan, Captain Francie will not have the same time to spare to the cripple; it's like the contrast between the married woman and the unmarried woman, with regard to whom St. Paul counselled; I red you study the chapter, Miss Fielding; the one would think of pleasing her husband, and the other only of pleasing the Lord. Captain Francie will be fain to uphold and divert the young wife who gave up everything she could for his sake, and it is but just that it should prove so.'

You may depend upon it, Bride Fielding thought a good deal of the Councillor and Mrs. Fielding that night, when she sat in her little room at Silvercraigs, which had seen such reverses in her life, and the shrivelled leaves were not yet all fallen from her rowan-tree. No rejoicing over their darling; no last hugging of a vanishing treasure; no fond, precious first-born's blessing, when the Lady looked in, with her placid good night, and 'Take care of the light;

and that is right, my dear; you could not try a surer preparation,' in commendation of Bride's open Bible. Mrs. Leslie was very benevolent, considerate, and indulgent, but the secret places of her heart had never been seized upon by a wilful, unreasonable, romantic little daughter; and it is possible she would have more pensive interest to spare for the upright, indomitable, enamoured young man, what Silvercraigs' heir might have been, courageously surveying his tiny domicile, and rehearsing the instalment of his wife in his chimney-corner—by courtesy.

When Bride looked out of her window very early next day, it was a Scotch mist floating in volumes, hanging in wreaths, obscuring even the Silver water, foaming with the approach of Martinmas spates. Bride scarcely knew whether to be glad of this fresh veil, this sympathetic shyness of the weather, or to shiver and be depressed at an evil omen. But Mrs. Leslie entered, smiling, and told her that 'a bride should go a white gate,' and that she did not think it would signify, though Captain Francie could not hope to distinguish the appointed signal fluttering from Bride's window. That was old Lady Leslie's token to the covenanting minister to assure him the wicked dragoons were taking their rest, in the dark days of persecution. Bride would not fare the worse because of such a precedent. The lasses were safe in the byre, the Laird had ridden over to Kier, and this cancelled Bride's hesitating, heart-sick project of a farewell. By the time Bride was dressed, and had breakfast, they would be in order at the manse,

and it would not be reckoned improper for the pair to call upon the Minister and ask him to perform the ceremony.

Bride could not wear a white dress in such an atmosphere; besides, it would be a sign of their business; and Mrs. Leslie praised her only coloured dress, and congratulated her that it was blue—blue was a bonny colour, the colour of the sky in the heavens; pink was gaudy; green was 'sorrow unseen,' and on no account to be donned for a wedding; and yellow was 'forsaken.' No, no, Bride said to herself, she would never 'wear the willow' again, and that consideration comforted and stimulated her until Mrs. Leslie fairly escorted her across the yard in sight of the impatient watcher by the water, in the dimness and dankness of the morning. Mrs. Leslie stood still until Bride had proceeded a few yards alone, and then she actually whisked from under her apron, and flung after the traveller on that long, dubious journey the old shoe, the seal of Scotch luck. True, it was a superstition, 'a freit;' perhaps it was wrong as well as vain, and Mrs. Leslie was a good deal ashamed of herself; but she would not defraud Miss Fielding of her least due when she had such need of luck, poor brave, faithful lass; and after having been so absurd, Mrs. Leslie found it necessary to wipe her eyes. And Bride Fielding and Captain Francie walked together as in a dream down the white rushing water, away all alone to be married, incurring the whole responsibility, sufficing to each other for all the world of spectators.

So strange, so very strange, this personal power and independence. How well Bride remembered Con Boyle's marriage to Mary Power, when the country-side rose up to the celebration. That was one extreme; but Bride had to look at the bridegroom, and to feel again that it was Frank Boyle, to reconcile herself to her own stripped and narrowed experience.

The man had no great objection to this version; he was enough for his own success, and his Bride was his entirely from first to last.

Down the Silver water, arm in arm—

> 'Twas when the wan leaves from the birk-tree were fa'in',
> And Martinmas dowie had wound up the year.'

And Bride, too, had been in the Laird's house 'a' the summer.' She also 'came there before the flower bloomed on the pea;' and Bride likewise could feel—

> 'An orphan she was, and they had been kind till her,
> Oh! that was the thing brought the tear to her ee.'

And so, as they did to poor 'Lucy' on her wearyful 'flitting'—

> '"Fare ye well, *Bride*," was ilka bird's sang,
> The mavis was saying't high on the tree sitting,
> And robin was chirping't the brown leaves amang.'

But Bride has her 'Jamie' to bear her company, and this makes all the difference in the world in carrying the similitude into the sweetest verse—

> 'The lamb likes the gowan wi' dew when it's drookit,
> The hare likes the brake and the braird on the lea,
> And Lucy likes Jamie——'

Ah! and Bride likes Frank; and therefore the little birds change their sad song, and warble quite cheerfully, 'Fare ye well, Captain Francie;' 'Fare ye well, Miss Fielding;' 'A good day to Frank Boyle and Frank Boyle's bride:' 'bride and bridegroom, bride and bridegroom, husband and wife, husband and wife.'

Round the gable, into the street, at the manse door, only a yawning lad or two, not enough to sound the alarm; but Bride's heart palpitating rebelliously that she should be the woman—she, the old spoilt Bride Fielding of Merrion-street, to come out thus unsupported to be wed.

The Minister's maid opens the door and grins broadly—they are detected now—and having ushered them into the study, she rushes first to apprise Mrs. Fowler of the sight before she summons the Minister from examining his winter apples in the orchard. The minister's study is plain and homely as grey drugget, green baize, curtainless windows, and painted wooden shelves can render it; but all Silverton views it with great respect, when the town goes, as it does often in those days, to consult Dr. Fowler. Even Captain Francie glances with momentary interest at the rows of books in heavy calf-skin, or dull paper boards; and Bride cowers in a corner as if she had intruded into the ante-room of a palace—cowers for the first time in her life, and sees nothing.

Presently Dr. Fowler enters—a fine, portly, clerical-looking gentleman, though with soiled nether garments, and decidedly threadbare coat—fresh from

his garden walk, dimpling over with amusement, for Dr. Fowler makes no bones of this exercise of his functions. With his peculiar cure of the middle and higher ranks, he gets more familiar with sentimental sorrows than with the broad troubles of the poor, and he feels bound to relieve them when he possibly can, and he highly enjoys the process; in fact, it is a species of escapade in the career of the priest, and has all the charm of a little licence, with no danger. It is of frequent enough occurrence in this staid, stern Scotland to enable it to take its place as a perennial joke at goodly dinner tables, and even at presbytery and synod boards.

'So you've come to claim my aid at last, Captain, and you, too, Miss Fielding. Well, you know, I cannot deny you my office, and no doubt "happy's the wooing that's not long a doing." You'll need witnesses, and Mrs. Fowler intends to be present; that is, if you will allow her.'

This was a far greater condescension from proud, precise Mrs. Fowler, of the set of the Halliburtons and the Ainslies, than any official act of the Doctor's. She had hesitated on the propriety of the step, but lively curiosity, a notion that Mrs. Leslie would like it, and perhaps Silvercraigs, notwithstanding his anger, and some real struggling, womanly sympathy, won the victory.

Until Mrs. Fowler descended, rustling in her invariable purple sarsenet, white silk shawl, and toque, the Doctor did his best to set his companions at

ease, and divert what might be supposed to be their agitation by anecdotes of similar *poses*, ending with his crowning story how he had once tied the knot between a happy couple, at their urgent request, not, like Dean Swift's parson, in the garden, but in the safe retreat of the pigeon-house, while the carriage with the bride's brother and sister-in-law was thundering up the streets, and its occupants stretching out their ireful necks, preparatory to forcing themselves past the barrier of his front door; 'And, my dear Sir and Madam, believe me, they are cooing like doves to this day.' 'The better day the better deed,' affirms the dogma, but the Doctor certainly held, 'The better deed the better place,' be it earth, air, or water. The Doctor kept himself fluent in these humorous annals, because they were the staple commodity with which he entertained the young ladies of his flock; and very fond the girls were of the Doctor, with a familiar as well as a reverential affection, which had made some of them on their death-beds send him little tokens of their love; and when he talked with them in a different strain for the last time, they would remind him tenderly of those old jokes, and beg to be held up, that they might put their thin arms round his neck, and give him a farewell kiss, as they did their fathers—the good Doctor crying like a child the while.

Mrs. Fowler entered at last, with the formal greeting of an ordinary acquaintance on an ordinary occasion, melting into a kinder, 'My dear, I am come

to bear you company,' whispered to Bride, when the dignified matron discovered how abashed and trembling the gay Irish girl appeared before her. Ah! poor girl, she was following in a rude, irregular fashion the destiny of her sex, and it became all true women, however delicate, to soften to her the brunt of that hour. When the Minister's maid, almost as accomplished in these dilemmas as the Minister himself —with a clean apron, and the grin only subdued in the presence of her mistress—followed close upon Mrs. Fowler, the next thing was to proceed to business.

Bride often conjured up the short, significant scene, and she always thought that Frank put her by his side, took her, did not have her given to him, and then marshalled her through the serious attention to Dr. Fowler's suddenly grave address; the mute, impressive sign of assent; the reception of the blessing; the awakening to the new life, with Dr. Fowler saluting her briskly, and Mrs. Fowler, and even the maid (who alone was the richer of them by one of Captain Francie's crowns, unless you count perpetual goodwill, and the open-stitched handkerchiefs, and comforters, and hassocks, with which Bride was ever after endowing the honoured couple), shaking her and Frank by the hand, and wishing them joy as Mr. and Mrs. Bayle. Mr. and Mrs. Bayle! Well, it was all one, as Frank's dear wife, come what might, till death should them part.

With pertinacious, old-fashioned hospitality, wine and cake were presented to the trespassers on the

Doctor's reverend calling — very unearthly bread and wine it tasted to Bride—and then, while it was still morning, Captain Francie was eager to carry Bride home, ere the town should be fully awake, and their deed and position bruited abroad.

It was time; a ball of urchins and older people was fast gathering, and if a good-humoured Scotch mob is outrageously noisy, it is on the occasion of a wedding. It required the Minister's authority to distract attention, and a great deal of speed and skill on Captain Francie's part to withdraw his newly-wed, blushing, overwhelmed wife from general observation, and ere the knowledge reached farther —darting as it did most electrically through the dormant town—to traverse the rural streets, craving the interesting news. They trod on air, and they passed only spectres as yet. If a casual passenger did notice and comment upon them in their quiet, everyday dress, it was but with a laugh in his or her sleeve at the French prisoner and Silvercraigs' cousin, who were proclaimed on Sunday, what a marvel! trusting to the early hour and thick weather to obscure their meeting and hasty walk through the streets on some one of their present important concerns.

Under cover at last! whence they might issue tomorrow, or next month, or next year, with the hardihood of commonplace married people. The confined, unpretending lodging over the seedsman's, and reckoned cheerful because it was opposite the principal draper's—the situation had its advantages—

the seedsman had suggested and supplied the lover-like plants in the windows, and Bride could look across the way and select, with the greatest dispatch and the slightest fatigue to mind and body, the fresh curtains and covers with which she would improve the kingdom they surveyed. And neither found a fault, or looked a fault; on the contrary, when Bride had been introduced to the landlady—a person of consequence, as the Grand Vizier, who has the last catalogue of the habits of the Caliph—and comforted that disturbed functionary, ruffled by the vision of any lady, though Captain Francie had hired her apartments with a pointed though mysterious reference to one lady in particular, only she might have regarded the hint as an aberration of bachelor intellect, and scouted rumour as a common liar, because it is painful to admit the selfishness with which the most agreeable bachelors will infatuatedly subscribe themselves Benedicts, and destroy the peace and ease of their attendants; when Captain Francie remarked, gayly, 'It is not so very unlike the ancient Dublin lodging, is it, Bride? only you are a fixture;' running on into a rhapsody that day, of course, 'So sweet an old love as mine was yesterday; so sweet a new bride as she is to-day; so sweet and dear a wife as she will be every happy to-morrow! I have wanted my fellow-woman, Bride, and see, I have her and hold her at last, and life has not failed to me; earth and heaven may yet be mine. I humbly give God thanks.' Such a speech settled the establish-

ment as perfect. But what would the Councillor and Mrs. Fielding have said? Between ourselves, the Councillor and Mrs. Fielding started from just such another flight, and Bride had never disapproved of their faith. And Bride could trust that her union was a very real and complete one, and that whatever it might want of men's favour it was concluded in the fear of God. Other spices might be amissing, but it preserved that essential salt. And her husband, scouted once as a wild Boyle of Knockmore, had grown a man of whom she could ask and learn great and undying truths. Captain Francie had gone far and fared ill in his day, but he had risen at last to be one of those householders who can bring forth out of his treasure things new and old.

CHAPTER XVII.

'THE LOCKS THAT HAVE GROWN GREY.'

'SHE may drink as she has brewed,' was Silvercraigs' unrelenting commentary on the *fait accompli.* The sentence was one of those household proverbs often handled, never more effectively than in the disastrous catastrophe of the low-born lass, when in exchange for her precious self, and

> 'A cow and a calf,
> A ewe and a half,
> Thretty gude shillings and three,'

the bonny wilful maiden will accept no equivalent but 'the long lad they ca' Jumping John,' who seems to have no weightier recommendation than his agility; and so the song proceeds pathetically to record the simple, bitter rue of the enlightened wife as a warning to other cotter lasses, as if cotter lasses or any lasses often listened to unpalatable experience—

> 'Oh! for my mother's kindly look,
> My father's kindly care;
> If I were in their ingle neuk,
> I'd never leave it mair.'

But the result was quite the reverse with Bride. Her 'yill,' in place of tasting 'bitterly,' proved a refreshing mingled draught, like the effects of sun and wind, on which she throve and prospered—granting that Mrs. Leslie was right, and there were little thorns of mortifications starting pretty liberally in her path. They had but a moderate independence; though Captain Francie, like Hal of the Wynd, would fight for his own hand, their worldly future was not very brilliant; but they were not encumbered with difficulties or oppressed with cares. They were a great deal to each other in trifles; in the few important points they were literally all in all to each other. Their anxieties and crosses, like expatriation or peculiar hardships, knit them together very closely, and fed the old flame until it burnt steadily on more purely and brightly to immortality. Neither were they isolated and forlorn; they rather stood on intermediate ground, where many different interests could meet, and they retained the innocent fragrance of what of the romance of their union was universally known. Mrs. Fowler was civil, and Dr. Fowler was more than civil, he was friendly; he appreciated Captain Francie as a gentleman, and a man of ability and merit, and was pleased to confer on him a favour. Mrs. Lindesay, the first time she rose up and went out from a sick-bed, on which she was brought very near to death, and where she lay long as if she had neither the will nor the power to lift herself up again, and return to the world, tottered on old Thomas Linde-

say's arm, to visit Bride in her lodgings—Bride, who in her happiness had spared opportunities to ask for her so often, to come and see her and nurse her, and it seemed a cordial to the poor languid heart to look at her friend, and, above all, to benefit her or afford gratification to her and hers. Making this observation, you may depend upon it, Thomas Lindesay, who studied the inclinations and whims of his pining young wife with yearning dread, would have willingly heaped attentions on Archie Buchan's friend, Captain Francie, and promoted him to any eminence within his command. Even the Misses Hislop, to please their now petted Jean, though they would not own to remorse, and, in general, sternly discountenanced any approach to runaway matches, which mulcted them of their rights, showed themselves quite affable to Mrs. Bayle.

The French officers rallied round *mon capitaine*, and declared his wife both *charmante et parfaite*, at once sage and sensible, *une belle rose, et un bon choux*, and showered upon her gifts of snared larks and curious salads, and wished with all their hearts that some other gentle Briton to whom they had learnt to vow with the utmost gallantry,

> 'Proud fair, thus low before thee
> Thy prostrate warrior see,
> Whose love, delight, and glory,
> Are centred all in thee,'

would look upon her happiness, and go and do likewise. Even the lean, affected, but honest French lady ap-

proved of Bride, and struck up a violent friendship for her—always wondering a little at her, that she would take country walks with her husband, in place of confining her exertions to an inspection of the Silverton shops, and insist on getting up at any hour to entertain Madame, who was apt to be eccentric in the period of her calls, in place of receiving her in bed.

Mrs. Leslie visited Bride, but under protest; for the Lady felt that she was rebelling against Silvercraigs, and her delicate conscience could not sit easy under the imputation, though she wisely preferred committing the enormity to living in estrangement from their kindred—a couple for whom she had sincere attachment and slender displeasure. Silvercraigs never came, and passed Bride when they did encounter occasionally on the streets and roads, and more rarely in company, with the coolest nod; still he was compelled to hear accounts to Captain Francie's honour; to find that the first senseless contempt for the foreigners had, in his case, leapt clean out; to be told of his sense, his cleverness, his steadfastness; to hear him mentioned everywhere with respect and consideration; to catch fragments of tidings of his having been dining with Dr. Fowler and Mr. Halliburton, as well as with Baillie Lindesay; to be made sure that he was not 'a hail fellow, well met,' in his countryman's common style; but that he worked his way, and having gained it, he kept it with the tenacity of an Englishman, or of the great Lord Wellington himself.

Why, the old wives and maids, with all their *animus*, were softened by Captain Francie's blameless behaviour as a husband to a wife who had trusted him so far; as they said, 'Just where you would have expected the least gratitude.' But Captain Francie was constant as a native, and very good-natured when his baby was born; and it was a far finer baby than Jean Blamire's, about which the Misses Hislop raised such an outcry—boasting of the substance it was to heir—to think they would condescend, or had the confidence, to utter such a boast! and Jean herself was killing it with kindness, and behaving like a mad creature about it (it was no wonder that old Thomas Lindesay made a fool of himself on so singular an occurrence in his life); but they were not aware that even Archie Buchan, dying fast now, asked about the bairn, and hoped it would be a blessing to Jean; and were not these words a blessing already? Jean said, wildly.

And abroad there were still those incessant marchings and counter-marchings, charges and retreats, gains and losses, and Europe watered and drenched again and again with human blood. At last, one fine morning, when hope had almost hidden her head, peace was proclaimed, and Captain Francie huzzaed with his fellow-prisoners, though as he and Bride admitted, when they talked it over privately, the change was of less consequence to them than to any of the thousands of war's hostages in Britain or across the Channel. But they took shame to themselves for the reflection.

Was not liberty the very breath of man's nostrils—the highest good under the sun? and could not Captain Francie go where he liked now, and put out his zeal and application to the best interest?

'Ay, ay! now that "the rout has come," that silly lass will have to march with the lave, and take up her quarters in foreign parts, learn queer practices, and submit to see her Frenchman come out in his true colours.'

'Na, Silvercraigs,' protested the Lady, in her unswerving justice, 'he has been a good man to her here, and he'll be a good man there. Bride does not look as if she would repent of her bargain.'

But, in the multitude of independent, airy flittings and joyous departures, or wonderfully reluctant leave-takings, with here and there the spoil of another generous bride, 'born' in captivity like Bride Fielding, it was ascertained that Captain Francie and his wife were not preparing to re-cross the Channel—the husband was naturalized in Britain—and they were only meditating removal to a larger town, proffering an atonement for the old cramps and long-restrained restlessness in greater resources and a wider sphere of action.

'Annie,' blurted forth the Laird, after many impatient, disjointed preambles, 'since my cousin, Bride Fielding, and that fellow, mean to stay at home, it does not suit with my credit that they should go pushing their fortunes and spending her penny in Edinburgh or Glasgow, like friendless ill-doers. I'll

never mortify away an acre of Silvercraigs from yon advocate lad who is to succeed me, but they may get the use of a sma' feck of the lying money to lend them a lift and set them up in a respectable way—keeping her fortune for the bairn, and preserving their light heads above water. You can take them the offer, Annie, though they dinna deserve it, and I am worse than they to put it in their power.'

'I could not undertake it, Laird; though I'll not say that you're wrong now, or that you're unlike yoursell, man, here. But you've never put your foot across their threshold; and they are a gentleman and lady—a real gentleman and lady, Silvercraigs—such as you seldom see. I refer it to yoursell how they would like it. Na, they would starve like yoursell first. And you need not distress yoursell, for they are in no want whatever; they've plenty for their tastes and habits, and the Lord will provide for the bonny bairn.'

The Laird growled again over Annie's folly, which in his heart he liked so much better than other people's wisdom, and averred they might go to France then, or not, for him; he would leave them to make a kirk and a mill of their needs and their powers—what cared he, he would like to ken? But the next day the Laird was in the town, his gaiters actually stumbled up Bride's narrow-enough stair, and startled her eye as she sat at work in temporary solitude. Bride gave a cry of joy—her cousin the Laird's early kindness and late resentment had pained her

more keenly than any one supposed. Now she made no concealment of her pleasure at seeing him like himself again, and her longing for a reconciliation; she betrayed neither pride nor malice. The rough, warm-hearted Laird was taken aback, in spite of his own emotion, by the overflowing good-will of his old favourite—sweeter than ever, lovelier as a matron than a maiden. How came that rover of a Frenchman to gather such a flower—win such a treasure? But the Laird was fairly conquered when Bride brought him her child—plucked it from its cradle, and presented it for his inspection and admiration, with the confidence of any other good, happy young mother, from the Queen of the country, showing her heir apparent to the Lord of her Treasury, downwards; never doubting that he would be pleased—never dreaming that he would bear it a grudge on account of its father. The Laird was only too completely beaten; he even stood the provoking superiority and authority of Captain Francie's call—'Come here, Bride, and see my fish,' as he arrived from an afternoon's sport in the Silver water.

'He has more cause to come and look at the big fish in your net,' gasped the Laird, with a hysterical attempt at satire, and with the perspiration on his brown face. The angler opened his eyes, but he was very courteous; and Silvercraigs and he had, perhaps, never approached nearer cordiality during the whole of Captain Francie's stay at Silvercraigs than within the next half-hour in Captain Francie's small house.

Captain Francie teased Bride, and laughed a little at the white flag over which Bride crowed; but he did not laugh at the clumsy effort at patronage—neither did he storm.

Captain Francie had a private interview with the Laird, and confided to him then and there his story. Whatever it might have done had it reached Silvercraigs earlier in their acquaintance, or had Captain Francie been a Scotsman, it made little difference in the relations at this date—Captain Francie had only demonstrated himself a degree nearer to Silvercraigs, while at the same time he had impressed upon him—what more could have been expected of a wild Irishman. And Bride Fielding was Irish, and therefore it had been quite natural that Bride should cast past offences into oblivion and fraternize with the offender.

Captain Francie did not accept the Laird's boon *in toto*, when it was still urged upon him, but he thanked him gently, and he consented to a compromise. With reference to his strong individual tastes and tendencies, Captain Francie had been inclined to follow out the study of the medical profession. In those unsettled times, after the interregnum of many years of war, men preparing to leave the army—no trade for poor men or volunteers in a decade of peace—and entering the reviving mercantile world, long blighted, were starting on life anew, and undertaking the apprenticeships and introductory curriculums which ought to have been digested in their youth. And the world was wise,

and saluted in grown men the full capacity which is but half developed in raw youth, and permitted a session or two's devotion to pass bearded recruits —ay, some with the hair grizzling or receding from the sunburnt temples—straight to their posts. Captain Francie demanded but enough time at college to qualify him to claim an examination, and, in the meantime, he would rather bestow Bride, and the child, and Flo, in the fresh, cheery country-house of the kinsman than in the town lodgings, so much more trying than those over the seedsman's shop in Silverton. Students still hovered about the High-street and Grassmarket, and his interest was to lie in the books, and bones, and drugs, which were to procure him his degree, and entitle him to practise on the King's lieges in any nook of the United Kingdom.

So it was settled—not altogether with Bride's concurrence, but to Silvercraigs' high glee, who, honest man, felt somehow that after all he had gained the victory (and so he had—a great victory), and to Mrs. Leslie's entire satisfaction. Bride for a space was 'a grass widow,' according to the nomenclature which Brother Jonathan has invented for the wives whom the gold diggings bereave—in part, and her bold boy was the lusty, fair-limbed, all-accomplished plaything of Elspie, and Sandie, and even Katie Drysdale—of every retainer on the township of Silvercraigs.

Bride was happy, especially when she had those

manly, lively, but thoughtful letters, noting his swift progress; and the ash-tree before her window was feathery as ever, the white rasps as bowery, the bleaching-green a green shield picked out with silver and gold—daisies and gorse, the saughs in the loan as stately trees. But there was a change; it was not only the spoilt boy, whom nobody would have heard of wanting—Silvercraigs would rather have given up Bride herself, soon—and who learnt to trot after the Lady, and be indulged as she had indulged his man-grown father, her French prisoner; indeed, little Frank was what the grandson would have been—the first-born child of the visionary son and heir, tender in his manly daring and buoyance—of Silvercraigs; but the young Doctor's letters, and his occasional important presence, were no more the traces of the French prisoner who used to loiter in the yard in the twilight, and dream over and over again the idle man's pale day-dreams, than he was Baillie Lindesay or Dr. Fowler. And young Sweethope never approached Silvercraigs now—no, rash and furious as was his career in all public places, however much the fathers of Silverton began to shake their heads bodingly, big Pate Home was wise in this instance; he never encountered Bride Fielding in the yard with Captain Francie's child (and he hugging up silly little Flo) in her arms, teaching him to know the red cock with the white feathers in his magnificent tail, and the speckled hen, suffering him to seize the best-tempered cow by the horn, sending him off in

ecstasies, seated among the jingling trappings of Sandie's leading plough-horse, with ribands yet plaited in its tail, as it had worn them at the races the day before yesterday, or depositing her burden in soundest and balmiest sleep within its cot, to return to the dusky parlour, and take Captain Francie's last letter from the little straw pocket-book which a French prisoner had manufactured for her, and pick out a word here and there by the waning light, and to break forth singing sweetly into lines of that love song which equals those of Burns—

> 'I'd mourn the hopes which leave me,
> If thou hadst left me too.'

Weighing with a luxury of preference

> 'One dream of love about thee.'

Oh! immeasurably above, infinitely beyond

> 'A world of bliss without thee.'

Before Captain Francie was re-established as a householder and man of weight, his letters reached Silvercraigs with other than the Edinburgh postmark. The candidate for future patients had adventured a voyage across the Channel to examine the paudeen lasser lena or wild yellow ranunculus, or the burnum lena or bittern, of Hibernia.

Precisely at this period, Mrs. Blake was one day unable to preside at her dinner-table, having been overcome by an unexpected meeting with an old friend, and poor Gracey, once more in her service, but sober enough in the end, as a wild Pat's widow,

demonstrated that nervousness was infectious, as she distributed the mashed potatoes and lifted the cooled wine; and in that very same week Con Boyle was absent from a country gathering, and, as the eighth wonder of the world, remained three days strictly at home, riding and walking over Knockmore, which was all secretly stirred, in company with a strange gentleman, who could neither have been an inhuman bailiff, whom he was endeavouring to speak fair, nor a purchaser for some of his few unentailed ring-fenced fields, nor a money-lender, for Mrs. Boyle of Knockmore herself accompanied him to the coach, and shook hands with him very warmly, as if he had been giving Con good advice, which it was well known all his associates did not throw away upon him. But when the mail drove off, and she called after him, 'You'll come again and see us,' the departing guest, in his wrapper and his cap over his ears, shook his head negatively, and looked out wistfully, as if he were carrying off a farewell impression of the great house and the country—hurdles, bogs, and all. Yet in his sadness he testified none of the emigrant's despair, and he was soon studying his packet bill, and stating with alacrity for the information of the ignorant, when the *Duke* sailed for Port Patrick.

At last arrived for good and all, Captain Francie? —no; Dr. Bayle—and in a wonderfully short season very few thought of the first in the last; only Bride looked further away through the breaches of time,

to the half-civilized slip of a groomsman, listening to Lord Norbury's jokes and Ned Lysacht's songs, and looking at Bride Fielding, to the faint music of the Castle band, on the eve of Con Boyle's grand marriage in the dining-room in Dublin. And he came at the lucky epoch when old Dr. Meiklehose thought of disposing of the active and modern share of his business, and early enough to sit up the last long nights at the Shaw with Archie Buchan—relieve the death-pangs, support the body on to the verge of its dissolution; and one can little comprehend God's great love, who has not at some season or other been propped up by strong, observant, faithful friendship. Infinitely happiest he who has to the full the divine rod and staff in the dark valley, and next in consolation one who possesses the stay of kind humanity hovering anxiously over him, waiting unweariedly by him, only laying down reverently—his dust. And surely Davie had the 'greater' as well as the 'lesser' light—his friend in all their confidences could not have missed the deepest and holiest, the one instruction worth imparting.

It was a sorrowful beginning, but Frank Boyle was always grateful that Archie Buchan was his first patient; others followed, less fatally wounded, more amenable to skill and care; and Dr. Bayle, with his firm hands and keen eyes, his penetration, patience, and power, and, above all, his Christian benevolence, all mellowed by his suavity, was abundantly welcomed in Silverton; and after a reasonable interval,

to the boast of the giddy boys and girls, was able to vindicate Bride's choice, and prove that lovely, independent Bride Fielding had made a good marriage—an excellent marriage—since Silvercraigs, Mr. Halliburton, and Dr. Fowler were disposed of—the first in the place, quite equal to any alliance projected with poor young Sweethope in his best days, and now, in his worst, wasting his substance on riotous living, as fast as a prodigal can effect that dire achievement. Even pleasant Mrs. Bayle grew melancholy, when she spoke of 'the joe' whom Silvercraigs had intruded upon her, and whom she had been compelled to jilt.

And Bride had her own house, with its drawing-room, consulting-room, dressing-rooms, multifarious space, in addition to the accommodation which necessity craves, and her fine garden, where the Doctor was always working on an odd night, and the children imitating him next day, and a stiff old lapdog basking in the sunshine, and her bower and summer-house, both the cheapest and prettiest contrivances in Silverton, because they were the feats of the same deft architect. These were the days when Britons were Dutch enough to like smoking a pipe, and drinking a glass of ale, and playing a game at cards, or sipping a cup of tea and reading a book under the sparred wood and creepers, or the cool, unglazed tiles, which served as vine and fig-tree in their pleasure-grounds: the habit belonged to the pastoral era of white gowns and gipsy hats, spreading over the land

with the first paper in the *Spectator*, and evanishing with the last pretty butterfly song of Haynes Bayley.

The Laird would never employ doctors till he was smitten by his last illness, but it quickly crept about that he had huge, latent faith in Dr. Bayle.

From pertinaciously detaining Bride to the last moment of her term, and industriously maintaining the intercourse with her after she had levanted from his protection a second time, the Laird gradually drew to cultivating the Doctor's society, until it became quite as much a relish to the quiet life at Silvercraigs as the sight of the face of a young, good, blithe woman. The Laird was constantly laying traps for the busy professional man, or he would bid the Lady send the message for the Doctor, who always deferred to her desires with loving gratitude.

Especially of a Sunday evening the Laird would wile up his old prisoner, to consult his judgment and receive his opinions on public affairs and domestic annals, as those of the esteemed neighbour and kinsman—ripening into the fast old friend. And doubtless the Lady and the man whom she looked upon as a son would sometimes rise to loftier themes, (though people were very shy of such discussions in those days,) to their own cheer and the Laird's edification.

Bride had her occasional guests from her own

country—Mrs. Blake, when the Courts were up, rather scandalizing canny Silverton by her carelessness, but supported by Mrs. Lindesay, and loudly defended by Silvercraigs, as the jolliest old dame he had ever taken by the hand. And when the rigidly particular Silverton worthies—the Misses Hislop and the like—would have pursed up their mouths and warned Mrs. Bayle that this was a very imprudent countrywoman of hers, and that she ought to be careful how she encouraged her recklessness, when they silenced even Mrs. Leslie, Bride would laugh till the tears came into her eyes, and assure them that she was very safe, before she intimated to them gravely, and with a certain sadness, that Mrs. Blake was her dear old friend, and that Dr. Bayle thoroughly shared the attachment. In the same way, when Bride was so wilful and eccentric as to pay the passage of that Irish widow for a nursery-maid, and she would use such freedoms with her mistress, and take off her visitors to their faces, and run on with shameful sauciness to the baker's and butcher's boys and the very old milkman, notwithstanding she had the decency to let her cap keep her in the house, Bride always smiled, and alleged that in her city they would have called Gracey 'good as gold,' and that for all her gossip she would not say a word which the heads of the family would wish unsaid—not for the world. Lastly, there was Mrs. Anastasia, who fortunately effaced the national prejudice produced by the two former importations, and struck

the learning-loving and mercenary sides of Scotland with sufficient favour and awe.

The whirlwind of the great soldier made its last transit across Europe, with no consequences to Bride Fielding, or any of hers, save the grief and humiliation of the onlooker who, having witnessed the anointing of Saul—the man who was the head and shoulders taller than his brethren—must mourn for him marching on his accursed road to Gilboa. Dr. Bayle continued a tranquil and industrious townsman of Silverton.

One summer afternoon the prosperous, popular Silverton doctor's five children were strolling happily down the green loan to the grandame house of Silvercraigs, when a heavy, red-faced man, in a cut-away coat, leapt off his horse, and accosted them abruptly.

'Are you the Doctor's bairns?'

'Yes,' answered the biggest boy, shortly. He knew the speaker, and so he was not amazed, like Arthur, or frightened, like little Eugene and Annie; but he sturdily objected to be unceremoniously catechised, when the man who did it was neither his father, nor the Minister, nor Silvercraigs, nor even old Mr. Halliburton.

'What are your names?'

The boy was silent—he was not bland like his mother—rather surly under the training of Silvercraigs. He could not recognise any right of the examiner to this small piece of information, thus

summarily required: he did not feel warranted in affording it. If it had been about his father's coming home, now, or the possible engagements of Silvercraigs, or to do anybody any good, or be of the least use; but this irrelevant curiosity was, to the juvenile conservative, unjustifiable and contemptible.

'Come, tell me like a man,' intreated Sweethope, playing, after an old fashion, with his whip, and glancing shyly up and down the lane, where he had overtaken lovely Miss Fielding on a far-away summer morning when the French prisoners were coming to be lodged at Silverton.

'What makes you wish to know?' inquired Frank, cautiously. How the Scotch character was grafted on that young gentleman.

'Because I would like to give a shilling to each of you lads, and a crown to the lass that is called Bride,' explained Sweethope, confusedly.

Frank underwent a struggle. Sweethope was a friend of Silvercraigs, so there was no indignity. Lads' pockets were not then plentiful in shillings. On the other hand, it was yielding to bribery, and lending himself to corruption. Frank twirled his stick, which he had cut from the hedge, and which he was peeling. Why do lads always peel at sticks?

But ere Frank's haughty virtue could triumph, the doubt was taken out of his hands and settled in a twinkling in spite of him.

Arthur, who was of a more obliging mould, enchanted by the generous guerdon, and unaware of any objection, started forward all in one bashful smile. 'If you please, Sir, I'm Arthur, and this is Frank, and yon is Eugene, named for my father's old colonel, and the biggest lassie is Annie, and the wee one (whom Gracey was resting with in the shadow of the hedge) is Bride;' and turning on his heel, and exerting his eyes to perform the full tittle of service for his reward, 'Yon laddie leaving the town is Philip Lindesay, coming out to play a game of shinty with Frank and me, and to get curds and cream, and spend the day with the rest of us at Silvercraigs.'

The wee one, 'no wee, white rose of all the worl d, but a rosy, vigorous, determined epitome of Captain Francie, with his blue eyes and massive forehead (of what use the last to a woman?) in addition to the blurred, undecided baby nose, mouth, and chin. Alas! this was a greater mockery of lovely Bride Fielding than the stout, fair, fresh, smiling lady, nodding frankly to an old acquaintance, somewhat in trouble now, from Dr. Bayle's drawing-room windows.

Sweethope rode on in displeasure and disgust, yet change or progress on the noble front of unity and immortality is the health-preserver of the universe.

THE END.

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